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THE MANNER OF THE MASTER AND STUDIES IN HIS TEACHING

THESE Studies are an attempt to set forth some aspects of the chief themes which recur in the teaching of Jesus. This volume seeks to arrange the teaching of Jesus in more definite and compact groups, so as to convey an impression of its character and scope. The work is the result of many years' reading and study, and takes account of the modern method and attitude in relation to New Testament study.

ALFRED H. LOWE, B.D.

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THE MANNER OF THE MASTER

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The Manner of the Master
and
Studies in His Teaching

BY

ALFRED H. LOWE, B.D.

Honours in Greek New Testament and Apocrypha
at the University of London

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TO FRIENDS,
OLD AND NEW,
FOR THE JOY OF FRIENDSHIP

PREFACE

THESE Studies were finished two years ago, but the well-known difficulties of publication have retarded their issue. They are an attempt to set forth some aspects of the chief themes which recur in the teaching of Jesus. Many other books have been written on this subject, but in most cases they are either too large or too technical to catch the interest of the average student. Smaller and more popular books, such as Glover's *Jesus of History*, and J. A. Findlay's *Jesus as They saw Him*, treat the subject in their own special way, and with much illumination. The present volume seeks to arrange the teaching of Jesus in ~~more~~ definite and compact groups, so as to convey an impression of its character and scope. But only the leading topics are dealt with. The work is the result of many years' reading and study, and takes account of the modern method and attitude in relation to New Testament study. Some points touched upon, such as the relation of Jesus to the Zealots, and their possible influence upon the form of His sayings, have scarcely yet been explored ; and it is unfortunate that the lack of historical material renders this line of investigation difficult.

In the chapters on the Kingdom and on Immortality the author ventures to hope that the method of presentation may not be devoid of freshness and interest, even to those who are familiar with these subjects.

I am indebted to the Rev. Walter Hawkins for his kindness in reading the proof and making suggestions.

HOUNSLOW,
June 1921.

A.H.L.

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THE MANNER OF THE MASTER

CHAPTER I

THE MANNER OF THE MASTER

THE foes of Jesus bore unconscious testimony to Him on more than one occasion, illustrating the general correctness of the proverb that 'truth will out.' Once when they sent their officers to entangle Him the emissaries themselves were silenced, and came back to declare, with reluctant admiration, that never did any man speak like this Man.

Their judgement has been freely confirmed by Christian people from age to age. The words of Jesus are like no other words. They are the treasured heirlooms of Christian hearts and homes, lovingly examined like rare jewels, their value and splendour held up with pride before the eyes of the world. To lose them would be to lose a great possession.

When traces of His words are found in other parts of the New Testament outside the Gospels, we are careful to gather up the fragments that

nothing be lost ; and when Oxyrhynchus yields us frail scraps of papyrus, preserving what are probably 'Sayings of Jesus,' we esteem these relics of the Master better than all the treasures of Egypt. What are the reasons for this high estimate ? They are at least two ; the first having its ground in the quality of the speech, and the second in the quality of the speaker.

First, there is attractiveness in the quality of the words. The speech of Jesus was simple, winsome, and charged with reality. Even minds embittered by prejudice were fain to confess 'the sweet words of grace' which fell from His lips ; and the enemies who reviled Him, as well as the friends who loved Him, and the crowds who hung upon Him listening, all bear witness to the arresting quality of His words.

And for us to-day the gospel story furnishes evidence enabling us to judge, in large measure, how Jesus spoke. We are not left to mere conjecture, or to tradition. Our estimate is based on the actual sayings and discourses of our Lord. These clearly reveal the simplicity of the speech of Jesus. The style owes nothing to a theological or philosophical training. It is the product of a living experience gained by direct contact with the sorrows and labours of ordinary men. Thus it happens that many an isolated word or turn of

speech throws suggestive light on the unrecorded life of Jesus, and is obviously reminiscent of the early days at home, and the surroundings of the carpenter's shop.

His familiarity with the arrangements and incidents of lowly homes, and with the quiet toil of common people, explains in some degree His natural use of homely words. As He moved amid astonished crowds, His inward eye flashed back to Nazareth. He saw His mother light the lamp, or sweep the room, or lift the barrels of meal, or patch the well-worn garments of the children. He saw the water-pots of stone, the drinking-cup, the lamp-stand. He recalled the carpenter's work-room, the beam and the splinter, the ploughs to be mended, the broken yoke, and the sweat and joy of daily labour. He heard the excited cries of play-mates as they enacted for themselves the familiar ritual of the wedding or the funeral; and all these things, near and understandable, He wove with simple art into the imperishable fabric of His sayings. As He went to and fro in the street and market-place, through the cornfields, along the lonely hill paths, or by the serene beauty of the Galilean lake, He gathered into the fresh chambers of His mind such things as simple folk know and understand.

All common scenes, each day's events
That with the hour begin and end,

were captured and shaped by Him for redemptive uses.

The simplicity of His speech and its nearness to common life caught the ear of the crowd. The style was as unusual as it was welcome. It stands alone in that age, instinct with the rich simplicity of true genius. If the dreary futilities of Rabbinical literature are indicative of scribal methods of discourse, we can understand the glad surprise of the common people when they heard the simple words of Jesus carrying a message which was at once life-giving and true to life.

But the simplicity of Jesus in conversation and discourse was not, in general, severe. That is to say, it was not merely the simplicity of clear and well-proportioned thought, but the simplicity which springs from genuine emotion and tender feeling. Hence it was pervaded by a winsomeness which finds its highest expression in that matchless word, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

This second quality comes out also in the gentle raillery and pleasant humour which, more often perhaps than we have hitherto imagined, lighted up the sayings and parables of the Master. There is, doubtless, more than a touch of it in the parable

of the friend borrowing loaves at the unreasonable hour of midnight ; and in the swift picture of the hypocrite with the beam in his eye ; as well as in the apparently severe word of Jesus to the Syro-Phoenician woman, ' It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.' It comes out in His description of the socially-pretentious guests, who tumble over one another in a scramble for the chief places at the feast ; and in His advice to them to choose the bottom seat, where they will be in no danger of being sent down, and may even find themselves conducted to a higher place. But wherever the Master employed this form of conversation we find no trace of bitterness or harsh sarcasm in it. It was always pervaded by a kindly spirit which made it winsome, and this was not the least of the reasons why the common people heard Him gladly.

Now this winsomeness of speech was not, and never is, the toilsome result of practice. It was instinctive, and arose out of the fine consideration and genuine love which Jesus had for the people. He saw them, distracted and burdened, and offered them the gift of love. It is nineteen centuries since men heard His human voice, but the ancient sayings which enshrine His teaching are still fragrant with that undying love. ' The odour of the ointment ' fills the world.

Another mark of the words of Jesus was that of reality. No suspicion of mere pretence or show can ever attach to the Master's words. They grip the mind by their clear acceptance of the supreme value of man's soul, and of all life's virtues. His arguments, His moral principles, His delineations of good and evil as they appear in human hearts, are all charged with insistent, terrific reality. Here are no shadows and subtleties of philosophic thought, but the realities of the moral universe embodied in the simple majesty of honest speech.

We discern this quality in His parable of the Rich Fool, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee'; in His unhesitating reply to the young ruler, 'One thing thou lackest'; and in all His stern denunciations of hypocrisy and arrogant pride. The moral scheme of Jesus is quite untouched by that hopeless scepticism of Omar's, in which so many modern minds take a sombre pleasure.

This world is but a magic shadow-show

Round which we phantom figures come and go.

He imposes upon us the solemn conviction of a real world of good and evil, in which faith may win a real victory and simple goodness make a real contribution to the riches of life.

Second, the quality of the Speaker lies behind our high estimate of the words of Jesus. Truth

may be truth by whomsoever it is uttered, but it gains impressiveness when it proceeds from a supremely gifted personality. Words seem cold and lifeless if we do not know anything of their personal source. We accept their truth with diminished enthusiasm. In this practical world what a man says is always qualified by what he is. This is perhaps the reason why a familiar quotation, coming from the far-off realms of classic literature, the utterance of some almost mythical personality, is charged anew with vital energy when it is accepted and uttered by a living man of honoured fame. If, as we know, words are embodied thoughts, it matters whose is the thought which they embody. Hence, to Christian people at least, the words of Jesus are of vital import because they come charged with the moral authority of His perfect character. They are at once an expression and a revelation of 'what manner of man He is.' The instinct is right which fears lest inadequate conceptions of the Master should detract from the moral force of His teaching. It is the recognition of the familiar truth that a man and his message are one.

Now the discussion of the actual value to be placed on the personality of Jesus does not come within the scope of this volume. The writer accepts Him as one who expresses all God to humanity

and all humanity to God. Where this position is assumed it is a matter of course that the teaching of Jesus will have a peculiar and impressive value. It will be no mere literary impulse, but an enthusiastic and abiding concern which will turn our minds to the study of His words. We shall approach them with the happy conviction, long ago expressed by Simon the fisherman, ' Lord . . . Thou hast words of eternal life.'

But with whatever pre-conceptions we approach the teaching of Jesus our impressions of the ' manner ' and the Man will excite hopes of meeting with a penetrating and exalted treatment of life's problems, duties, and obligations. This is indeed what we do find every time we come to this source of truth ; and our apology for treating once more some aspects of the Master's doctrine is that it is always profitable to work these veins of gold, if perchance some neglected treasure may be brought to light.

Moreover it is necessary to engage in ever fresh study of what Jesus meant because in spite of the simplicity of His words there are many allusions which time has blurred, and many figures of speech which require the light of contemporary events for their correct interpretation—a light which grows increasingly clear through the manifold labours of modern scholars. We must not forget, also, the constant use of picture language which was

characteristic of Jesus, and the influence of the ideas, literature, and revolutionary movements of the time upon the form of His teaching. For example, the ideas of the Rabbis, the popular writings of the apocalyptists, and the national aims of the Zealots have undoubtedly influenced the sayings and discourses of our Lord.

CHAPTER II

THE MASTER AND THE FATHER'S LOVE

IF the arrestive style of Jesus in discourse was due to some of the characteristics which we have named, it was also due in part to the kind of theme which He loved to expound. His matter was of absorbing human interest, for He mainly spoke of the fundamentals of life, moving with unfaltering steps in regions of thought and experience where ordinary men hesitate and are bewildered. It is a tribute to His greatness that the people came to Him because He uttered, with living power, the deep things of God. In His presence they felt themselves brought face to face with the real world and with eternal truth.

But though the vision of Jesus penetrated the whole extent of moral life, and although He manifested an intense interest in all the high themes of religion, He appeared to possess favourite subjects. Certain lines of thought re-appear at intervals, and some truths are made prominent and impressive by repetition.

What, then, was the favourite theme of the Master? Without disputing the possibility of other views, it may reasonably be claimed that the

Father's love was the cherished thought of His heart. Other thoughts He had, but they come after this one. He spoke often, and impressively, of the soul, of the Kingdom, and of righteousness ; but the wealth of His enthusiasm, and the full generosity of His spirit appear most strikingly when He begins to tell men about the love of God. Two things strike us as characteristic of His words on this subject.

First, they are pervaded by an atmosphere of joy and eagerness. It is not necessity or duty, but the spirit of delight, that moves all His utterances relating to the tender providence of the Father. If we may reverently use ordinary human phrases to describe His attitude, we may say that He revels in the opportunity to converse on this theme. It runs like a golden thread through His table talk, His sayings, and His parables. It underlies and illumines His teaching about the Kingdom, about human nature, and about immortality. It is the essence of the Good News which He proclaimed to poor people ; and as we steep ourselves in His gracious doctrine, we feel the thrill of eager pleasure which the Master experienced as He unfolded the mysteries of Divine Love. The theme was never hackneyed on His lips, nor was it ever hackneyed in His heart. It was fresh like the morning, radiant like the sun—a thing of pure

joy and gladness, which overflowed irresistibly through the channels of speech. It may fittingly be compared to the delight of a child in a mother's love—as pure, as simple, and as spontaneous. He is surprised when men are anxious about food and raiment and life, and He eagerly urges them to put their anxiety aside because the Father knows that they have need of these things. In all kinds of ways He presses home the happy knowledge of a gracious providence surrounding men. God is like a watchful shepherd who knows his flock intimately, calling each by name; and if one is lost in the wild places there is no rest until it is recovered and brought home with rejoicing.

Second, the Master's words on this theme are charged with absolute confidence. He had none of the doubts and haunting fears which afflict ordinary mortals as they confront the mysteries of life. He knew that men live in 'a friendly universe,' and He taught them to place unhesitating trust in providential love. 'If God so clothe the grass . . . shall He not much more clothe you?' 'Ask and it shall be given,' 'Shall not God avenge His own elect?' are some of the many sayings which impress the mind with their strong assurance. It is significant and consoling to troubled hearts that the best and wisest Person, who Himself suffered so keenly and unjustly, should proclaim

unflinching the tender care of God. Confidence begets confidence, and the strong assurance of the Master has energized many a soul buffeted by the waves of doubt, and nigh to perishing. Weak mortals, standing before the mystery of the Unknown have found enduring faith through the message of Him who was certain that

Behind the dim Unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.

We have now to examine the doctrine of Providence which Jesus taught with such joyful confidence. Its connexions reach back into Israel's prophetic age when the consciousness of God's personal rule was quick and sensitive. But it was a more thorough and intimate conception than that which the prophets attained. Their spiritual imagination pictured Jehovah holding sway over nature and the nations—majestic realms of divine action in which the individual soul took but a lowly place. Jesus, on the other hand, focused attention upon personal values, and cheered men with the sense of an intimate and individual providence. Glimpses of this consoling idea sometimes appear amid the austere conceptions of the prophets, as in the familiar words, 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and the

mothers He shall lead with gentle kindness.' It was these occasional fore-shadowings of a personal relationship that Jesus took up and developed into His doctrine of a Father's love, where providence shines with divinest radiance.

How did Jesus impress this thought upon His disciples? He employed the method of leading their minds from the less to the greater; from the known to the unknown. The facts of nature and the experiences of human life were made the starting-point of His message. He showed, for example, that the birds of the air, the wild flowers, and the fading grass are all the objects of divine care. Wisdom beyond the highest reach of our thought has been bestowed upon them, though their life is frail and fleeting. It is a greater and at the same time, a more certain thing, that God should care for souls whose possibilities and destiny are infinitely higher than those of flowers and birds. 'Ye are of more value than many sparrows.' These creatures of the natural world do but little for themselves. 'They toil not, neither do they spin.' They are not busy with sowing, reaping and gathering into barns. They have no conscious sense of the care of the Father; yet they are sustained from day to day, and are clothed in forms of delicate beauty and glowing colour. Far more surely will the Father's love tenderly aid His children

who labour with Him at life's high tasks, and who are able to give Him the joy of conscious gratitude and trust.

It would be a grave mistake to suppose that these simple arguments were for a simple age, and can have no force in face of the larger and more critical demands of modern thought. Time and advancing knowledge have enriched them with an added significance. This is so for two reasons; first, because present-day scientific methods, so painstaking and accurate, have brought to light the hidden wonders of creative work in common things. Constructions of incredible fineness and delicacy emerge under the eye of the microscope. Nothing is slipshod; everywhere there is supreme skill and perfection. The science of the infinitesimal has dealt a fatal blow to the notion of a God who does not care. The modern mind, when it considers the wild flowers of the field, sees the indubitable signs of unerring care and wisdom

Second, because to-day the soul—or, to use a modern term, personality—is recognized as a possession of the highest value, and its moral perfection is seen to be the goal of the divine purpose in this world.

These facts increase immensely the force of the argument from God's care of natural things to His care of the soul. It is in the last degree improbable

that the extraordinary care bestowed upon the grass and flowers should be withheld from human souls.

Next, Jesus started from the accepted facts of family life in order to convey the certainty of providential love. His frequent use of the term 'father' was in itself an argument for the reality of affectionate bonds between God and the world. This sacred name of God was an unceasing plea for man's trust in Providence. It was the pledge of fair treatment, wise guidance, and generous love. Even a human father might be trusted to deal well with his children. He would not give them stones for bread. Though himself imperfect he would know how to bestow good gifts. Much more would the Heavenly Father do this.

There is a wealth of teaching on this point in the Fourth Gospel. It all involves a doctrine of Providence which is peculiarly intimate and full of affection. The Son's fellowship with the Father, and the life and love derived therefrom, may be shared by all men; for the Father seeks to draw His children into spiritual union with Himself. Providence here takes its highest form of Fatherly love. God does not rule the world with the cool skill and wisdom of a statesman, taking only a detached and distant interest in individuals, but with the warm love and close personal concern which characterize family relation-

ships. Thus it may be claimed that the Christian religion is differentiated from, and is superior to, other religions, not merely by teaching a doctrine of providence, but by the *kind* of providence which it has revealed.

In addition to the testimony afforded by fragments of the Master's speech, and by explicit sayings on the subject under review, we find that confidence in the Father's love permeates the parabolic teaching. It is clearly pictured in the story of the Prodigal. There the Father is presented as watching with unwearied solicitude for the home-coming of a foolish son. The beautiful suggestion is implied that providential love is not weakened by the waywardness of men. It remains unshaken in its strength, and makes an eager response to the seeking heart. Its gifts are lavished on a generous scale according to human need. Not the painful exactness of retributive justice, but the unmeasured abundance of perfect love is the characteristic thing in providential care.

Varying aspects of the Father's love are displayed in other parables. It is very patient. No hour is too unseasonable for it (Luke xi, 5-9). No amount of insistence wearies it (Luke xviii, 1-8). No difficulties are too great to stand in the way of its strong will to save (Luke xv, 3-10).

All these fragments of truth, gleaned from words

and parables, harmonize with the unvarying doctrine of Jesus, that Divine Love governs the world and tenderly cares for the humblest soul. St. Augustine was not going beyond the Master's idea of providence when he said of God, 'He loves us every one, as though there were but one of us to love.'

But the speech of Jesus does not exhaust His revelation of the Father's love. His actions utter a message, and it is permissible to call in their testimony. We are accustomed to regard Christianity as an historical religion, embodying a revelation in life and action. The spoken word is but a part of its message. This being so, we may expect the deeds of the Master to enshrine precious truths. The testimony from this source is particularly valuable in relation to the conception of providential love. For if, as Christianity claims, Jesus represents the Father, what He did will throw light on God's attitude toward men.

Now Jesus spent considerable time on works of healing. The body of man, impaired and shattered by disease, handicapped by loss of sight and hearing, or tormented by madness, excited His ready sympathy and became the object of His loving care. His miraculous works were not merely manifestations of His power; they were also expressions of His deep solicitude for men. Hence they indicate the scope of providential love,

and justify the prayer of faith for physical blessings. The ultra-refined spirituality which shrinks from praying for material welfare hardly grasps the significance of the healing ministry of Jesus. That ministry is our warrant for the belief that the Father's providence embraces life as a whole ; so that nothing that is a blessing, whether in the material or in the spiritual realm, need be omitted from the circle of our prayers. We may turn from the extravagances of faith-healing without giving up the conviction that our physical body is a sacred possession whose healthful life is the concern of divine love. This is what Jesus plainly taught when He healed the sick and gave back the kindly light of reason to darkened minds.

But in addition to these special activities, we have the witness of the Master's ordinary deeds. As He went about doing good He realized the true idea of providential love. He illustrated its universal scope and impartiality in His treatment of Zacchaeus the publican, the Roman centurion, and the Syro-Phoenician woman. He showed its patient tolerance in His attitude to the hostile Samaritan villagers. He showed its eager responsiveness in His ready welcome to all classes, especially to those who might feel lonely and forsaken. And in His forbearance toward His disciples He revealed its enduring optimism which kept on working, through

all their misconceptions, to elevate their thoughts and enlarge their vision. John in his intolerance, Peter in his denials, and Thomas in his doubts, were all indebted to a love that would not let them go. Such was the love of Jesus; and the love of Jesus is the love of God. If we desire to know what providential love means we must let the deeds as well as the words of the Master bear their glowing witness.

Last of all, the Father's love received matchless expression on Calvary. From that rough cross, where a Son's blood and a Mother's tears were mingled, love flowed down to vitalize the moral life of mankind. There, man at his worst strove with God at His best; and the victory rested with God. Not the least of the blessings of Calvary is its assurance of a love which goes to all lengths to redeem. The providential love there displayed is not the serene and unruffled quality which some bloodless theologians have represented. It is a holy passion which unites itself with the tragic suffering of mankind. Herein is love, such as strong men can reverence, and weak men can cling to, a love that accepted the discipline of human experience even unto death, yea the death of the cross.

In this final act Jesus spoke with a loud voice which echoes down the generations. This is the

eighth word from the cross—God is Love. The seven other words were spoken, and fell on the ears of men. This word was unspoken. It had no speech nor language—only the language of silent sacrifice; but it rings in the heart of the world.

When, therefore, we ask what Jesus taught concerning the Father's love, we must gather in all His deeds, as well as all His words, and from them shape the ideal of His heart.

CHAPTER III

THE MASTER AND THE KINGDOM

NEARLY every century sees the appearance of some phrase or idea which gains wide popularity and influence because it expresses the spirit of the age and fits in with prevailing modes of thought. The nineteenth century saw the rise to power of the idea of evolution. Men's attitude and thoughts were modified by it in all directions, and modern literature bears its indelible stamp. In the sixteenth century the idea of freedom was engaging attention and being applied to religion and life. In the Middle Ages the idea of chivalry was potent, and worked itself out in manners and adventurous exploits.

The first century of the Christian era was not different in this respect. It had its dominant idea which was expressed in the familiar phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven.' This is perhaps one reason why Jesus selected the phrase to describe the moral state which He came to set up among men. All classes among the Jews of that age had a living interest in the thought of the kingdom. The Zealots, the Pharisees, the Apocalyptists, and the small circles of quiet folk who looked wistfully

for Israel's consolation felt some new thrill of hope at the very sound of the words. Here was one of those living ideas which, in all ages when they rise, have power to transform the lives of men, determine their actions, and turn the stream of human history.

The immense popularity of the idea in the time of Jesus can scarcely be exaggerated. Some sections of the people were excited by it to a pitch of burning fanaticism, and were eager to throw themselves against the solid rock of Roman power in the hope of shattering it and thus ushering in the glorious rule of God. Whenever a new voice was heard men listened with straining eagerness to discover what it had to say about the kingdom. If it were silent on the theme it was received with disappointment or with indifference. If it spoke in harmony with popular hopes it was acclaimed as sent of God.

Any serious study of the teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom must take notice of this background of tense expectation which marked the popular mind. It is the explanation of many of His words, and of much of His reticence in His treatment of the theme.

Humanly speaking Jesus could scarcely have avoided making use of the phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven.' He employed it both because of its popularity, and in spite of the dangers of misunder-

standing arising from the pre-conceived notions of the people. But He also used it because it was accordant with the doctrine He had to proclaim, and because it had its roots in the venerated past of the nation.

It does not lie within our present purpose to trace the rise of this vital idea and its development in Judaism ; but it is perhaps necessary to mention the fact that the royal note of an approaching kingdom is sounded in divers ways all through Jewish history. Prophetic messages ministered to the yearning hope from age to age. God would have His day when He would lead His people into a kingdom, glorious, triumphant, everlasting. Men watched with unsleeping vigilance for this realm of God, saluted it from afar, but never set foot within its sacred borders. At last the prophetic voice fell into silence, choked by the narrow legalism of the scribes ; but the hope of the kingdom was imperishable, and soon the apocalyptic seers began to paint their glowing pictures of an imminent day when God should vindicate His holy ones by setting up the kingdom of their dreams. The Book of Daniel, the Book of Enoch, the Psalms of Solomon, and many other writings, express in varying strain these deathless aspirations, with renewed power and fascination.

Under such conditions of religious expectation

Jesus began to preach. His opening proclamation was, 'Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. iv, 17). Thus the people's phrase became the Master's theme. He associated Himself with their hopes, but gave those hopes a broader and more spiritual meaning. Although some writers have argued otherwise (e.g. Weiss), there is no trace in the teaching of Jesus either of a political or of a national kingdom of God. The vision of world-rule, presented on the mountain top, which constituted the second temptation (Luke iv, 5), plainly teaches that Jesus repudiated the narrow Jewish conceptions of the kingdom. The old phrase on His lips became the medium of a loftier idea. The genius of the Master, working with the brushes and colours of the Jewish seers, has painted a picture of the heavenly realm whose spiritual beauty far surpasses the cruder conceptions of former days. What that picture was we shall endeavour to make clear by the outline now to be presented.

~~First~~ What did Jesus mean by the kingdom of heaven? His conception had two aspects. It looked to the supremacy of God, and it looked to the blessedness of man. The former was the chief consideration, and the recognition of it was the necessary prelude to the realization of the latter.

~~Prof.~~ Dalman in his book, *The Words of Jesus*,

gives cogent reasons for the view that when our Lord spoke of the kingdom of heaven He meant the sovereignty of God. That is to say, He laid the emphasis on the supreme rule of God in human life as the essential mark of the kingdom. Once that rule is established and recognized the spiritual perfection and blessedness of mankind will follow.

It is not an exaggeration to say that this primary aspect of the kingdom has often been disregarded. Indeed, the notion of a golden age of prosperity, of perfect social conditions, in short of Utopia, is even to-day the chief element in popular ideas of the kingdom. Such notions are not wrong in themselves, but they err in placing first what should be second; what indeed cannot be fully realized except as a consequence of the recognition of God's sovereign rule. The teaching of Jesus does not countenance any view of the kingdom of heaven which either excludes God, or puts God second. It is a capital error to throw out of focus the Master's vision of the kingdom by stressing the good of man and forgetting the supremacy of God. The kingdom that Jesus sees and pictures is one of human hearts rendering perfect loyalty and love to the Supreme Father of men. When He taught His disciples to utter the petition, 'Thy kingdom come,' the idea in His mind was adequately summed up in the succeeding phrase, 'Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth.'

Jesus never deluded men by the fair vision of a good time coming apart from loyalty to God. He inspired them to long and to labour for the supremacy of God, and thereby turned them in the only direction wherein all pure hopes and aspirations may find fulfilment.

In proclaiming this doctrine of God's supremacy Jesus was beset by a peril arising from the aims of the Zealots. These political revolutionaries also held that God alone should be Leader and Lord. Therefore no Caesar must reign over Israel. Superficially, the teaching of Jesus did not seem inconsistent with their ideals, and some Zealots may have been inclined to acclaim Him as on their side. The disciple known as Simon the Zealot was perhaps originally a member of this nationalist party. But inasmuch as redemption, and not revolution, was the purpose of Jesus, it was needful for our Lord to distinguish His position and teaching from that of the Zealots. To have been identified with their national ideals would have hampered, and perhaps defeated, His own purpose. Therefore He avoids this by declaring that the sovereign rule of God was not of national but of universal application. It was to be set up in the hearts of all mankind. The Zealots, who were extreme Pharisees, would doubtless hear with bitter disapproval the predictive word which Jesus on one occasion uttered,

‘ Many shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.’ And other sayings of a similar import would serve to discourage any attempt to identify Him with their narrow and violent propaganda.

Nor was the striking *dénouement* anticipated by the Zealots, in which God would openly display His sovereign power for Israel’s glory and the confusion of the Gentiles, a part of the conception of Jesus. In direct opposition to such ideas He declared that ‘ the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.’ It would not be a triumphant spectacle marked by outward pomp and circumstance but a silent and invisible victory over the hearts of men. True, there are other sayings of Jesus, apparently different, such as that in Luke xxi, 27, ‘ And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory ’ ; but this is apocalyptic picture language, which, whilst it points to a real consummation of the kingdom, does not of necessity imply a spectacular display on a visible stage, but rather an inward recognition by all mankind of the spiritual triumph of God in Christ. Opinions will of course differ as to the precise significance to be attached to these striking sayings of our Lord, but are we not to be guided in our interpretation by His spirit and character as presented in the Gospels ? And if He was meek

and lowly in heart, is it not more consonant with that to suppose that His language in these cases is figurative, enshrining in vivid colour the promise of a quieter and more spiritual victory than that which appealed to the turbulent Zealots, or to their modern representatives who seek a sign from heaven?

But there was another aspect to the kingdom in the mind of Jesus. The reverse side of the sovereign rule of God was the blessedness of man. ~~Prof.~~ Dalman says (*op. cit.* p. 136), 'The completed establishment of God as sovereign implied, for those who experienced it, absolute happiness.' This accurately expresses the teaching of our Lord. The kingdom does indeed mean the supremacy of God, but the rule of God is the sufficient cause of the joy of man. Hence it is that Jesus associates with the kingdom those festal characteristics which appear in the joy of the man who found hidden treasure, in the parable of the Great Supper, and in the rejoicings of the Marriage Feast. The members of the kingdom freely obey a rule which inspires them with happy and abiding gladness, seeing that with full spiritual sympathy, they enter into the joy of their Lord.

If we bring the message of Jesus concerning the kingdom into relation with modern life, and express it in common terms, what does it mean? It means that submissive love and loyalty to God in the

hearts of men should be the end of our endeavour. It means that only so can those conditions be secured which result in permanent benefit to individuals and society. It means that the hope of a good time coming, apart from the recognition of God, is an unsubstantial mirage which will recede and fade as men toil painfully towards its delusive splendours. It means that whilst purer homes, better social conditions, and all modern schemes of social improvement, are legitimate and desirable aims, they are not, in themselves, capable of creating the golden age of happiness which men see in wistful visions. These ideal conditions, with the ideal atmosphere of friendliness and love essential to their maintenance, can only come as men progressively acknowledge the supreme rule of a loving Father.

The next question that requires consideration touches the time when the kingdom shall be manifested. Is the kingdom a present reality, or a future hope? At first the words of Jesus on this point seem to lack consistency, and thus some writers maintain that Jesus always thought of the kingdom as present, whilst others as strongly affirm that He always viewed it as a future blessing.

There is, however, no reason to take an uncompromising stand for either of these positions. What Jesus has to say as to the time of the kingdom's

manifestation is capable of being harmonized on broad and general lines, even though we may leave, here and there, some matters that cannot be fully explained.

The various sayings of Jesus which deal with this aspect of the subject need not now be set out in detail. It will be sufficient to notice that they fall into three classes, and to give an instance of each type. The first type consists of sayings which suggest the nearness of the kingdom, as when Jesus said, 'Repent ye ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' The second implies that the kingdom is already present, as in the saying, 'The kingdom of God is among you.' The third contains sayings which seem to involve the gradual growth of the kingdom to a distant day of crisis. The parable of the Mustard Seed is an instance ; and the figure of the wheat which slowly ripens and then is suddenly harvested, is another example.

Without any special consideration of opposing or parallel views our object is to offer an explanation of the above sayings which will help to reveal their essential harmony. We believe that this harmony exists ; in other words that Jesus had a consistent and steady message on the point under review ; that He was not subject to waves of doubt and despondency which made Him uncertain whether the kingdom was really imminent, or yet far distant,

or actually present while He uttered His words. Even if we take no specially exalted view of our Lord's Personality, ascribing to Him a Divinity which would make such wavering inexplicable—I say, even so, the picture of His steadfast human character as presented in the Gospels is sufficient to make us ask whether the Jesus we know in those books could be so hesitant and unreliable on such an important matter. If John the Baptist was not a 'reed shaken by the wind,' much less was Jesus. The firmness of His moral convictions and the simple consistency of His teaching on other themes are indubitably clear from the facts of His ministry. His more than prophetic insight gives steady guidance on such matters as righteousness and love, prayer and sacrifice. Why should He become confused and uncertain in speaking of the kingdom? If such uncertainty were really proved to be involved in His sayings, we should have to seek some reason for it; but inasmuch as it is only a doubtful theory, we may legitimately bring in the evidence of His character to support the opposite view.

As a matter of fact it is much more probable that the diversity of His standpoint in treating of the kingdom arises from the nature of the subject rather than from any inward doubt. Though His sayings are different none of them suggests uncer-

tainty in the speaker. The note of confidence which is discernible when He says, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand,' is just as plain in the saying, 'There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom' (Matt. xvi, 28). If then Jesus says that the kingdom is near, and is present, and is to come, we may surely maintain that He is stating a truth in each case, and that those truths are reconcilable.

Let us now briefly examine the sayings of the kingdom as represented in the three classes named above. What did Jesus mean when He said that the kingdom of heaven was at hand? Schweitzer and his school might say that He referred to the great apocalyptic transformation and judgement which Jesus, in common with John the Baptist and others, was expecting in the immediate future. But the words do not necessarily carry this meaning. Do they not refer to the beginning of the kingdom rather than to its consummation? This seems more probable. The kingdom, fore-shadowed for so long, is now definitely inaugurated. It is, so to speak, available in a new and special way. Jesus laid down the conditions of entrance, and defined its scope. The conditions were repentance and faith, and the kingdom was thrown open to all mankind. Never before had the kingdom of God

been proclaimed on such broad and liberal terms. For the first time that kingdom was 'at hand,' that is to say, available in the living present to every class and race. Men needed not any longer to gaze across the ages for it; they had no more any need to yearn hopelessly for a kingdom which was the heritage of a select few. All might now come under this supreme rule of God, and in it find their highest good.

The next step in our study is to mark the kingdom as actually present. It was not very long after Jesus had proclaimed the imminence of the kingdom that He was able to say that it was being subject to violent capture, and that enthusiastic people were carrying it by storm. The facts of the gospel illustrate this word. Fishermen from the lake of Galilee, tax-gatherers from Capernaum and Jericho, teachers from Jerusalem, rich men from the country, sinners from the city streets, and strangers from Samaria and Sidon, were offering their allegiance to Jesus, in whom the sovereign rule of God was perfectly recognized and as perfectly obeyed. In other words, as men accepted Jesus they accepted the kingdom, and in His Person and work it was present. He Himself once said that His work of casting out demons was a proof that the kingdom of God had arrived (Luke xi, 20). And in another place we read that He pronounced His disciples

blessed because they saw what prophets and righteous men had in vain desired to see ; which was nothing less than the kingdom.

Moreover, when He said, 'The kingdom of God is among you,' He was only stating directly what is implied in many of His other sayings and parables. The theory that His work was simply a preparation for a future kingdom does not therefore seem capable of satisfactory proof.

But the third class of sayings mentioned above does find a place for the consummation of the kingdom in the future. The kingdom already inaugurated is destined to grow in the souls and societies of mankind. The parables of the Tares and Wheat, the Mustard Seed and the Leaven seem clearly to teach this, and in the face of them it is difficult to maintain that Jesus looked for an immediate appearance of the perfected kingdom. He saw rather a process of development, an historical unfolding of the glories of the kingdom as men more and more submitted themselves to the rule of God. This process would have its stages, which in one parable He refers to as the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. And there are some of us who are inclined to believe, in view of the unimaginable periods of physical evolution, that the moral kingdom of Jesus is yet but 'a blade,' whose perfect beauty has still to come.

Such a view of the future development of the kingdom is not inconsistent with the belief that the kingdom will have its times of special crisis, its 'days of the Son of Man,' when there shall suddenly break upon the vision of men a fresh revelation of its glory and power, such that the rule of God will seem to be on the verge of perfect victory. Was not Pentecost such a Day, when men felt the quickening winds of God's power, and its cleansing flame? Was not the Reformation such a Day, when hoary superstitions perished and an epoch of living faith began? Was not the eighteenth-century revival another such Day, when vicious and hardened sinners came with broken cries of penitence to the feet of Jesus? Are not such momentous experiences worthy to be described in the glowing colours of Jesus, as a coming of the Son of Man in power and great glory?

Interpreted on these lines, the teaching of Jesus falls into general order and harmony. Unexplained portions there may be; but that is so in the case of every theory, though fewer in the above instance than in some others.

There is, however, one view of an opposite character which is so important as to call for special notice at this stage. It is the theory already mentioned that, whilst Jesus placed the consummation of the kingdom in the future, it was an immediate and not

a distant future to which He referred. Many eminent critics strongly incline to this position. Dr. Charles says 'it is proved beyond question.' And Wendt regards it as manifestly pre-supposed. In support of their contention, those who hold this view point to such sayings as, 'Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.'

It should at once be said that the method of explaining these hard sayings by ascribing their form to the evangelists, or to changes in the course of oral tradition, or to supposed interpolations of apocalyptic material, is not satisfactory, inasmuch as such suggestions are quite speculative, and have no textual or firm traditional evidence behind them. It is better frankly to admit that they are utterances of our Lord which are as yet incapable of complete explanation. Nevertheless some relief may be obtained by noting that our Lord may have been referring, in these particular sayings, to His manifestations at the destruction of Jerusalem, or at the Pentecostal crisis, a view supported by the Fourth Gospel.

On the other hand, the suggestion of the imminence of the kingdom which pervades these sayings may be due, not to a mistaken hope, but rather to the absolute confidence of Jesus in the victory of the kingdom. So utterly certain was He that God's

rule would be set up that in some of His utterances the question of time lies entirely in the background. He was ever indifferent to times and seasons in this connexion. He never satisfied the curious craving for the mere dating of His great epochs of spiritual triumph. So far did He put definite moments and hours out of His mind that He once uttered the strange saying, 'That hour knoweth no man . . . not even the Son.' It was as though He said, 'The victory is certain. Does it matter when?' Whether the kingdom came at this or that time was not uppermost in the thought of Jesus. What He desired to impress upon His followers was the certainty of its triumph. And there can be no doubt that He saw that triumph with prophetic clearness. Now to see a thing clearly is to see it near. The hills which seem far off on a misty day, appear with majestic and impressive clearness when seen through a pellucid atmosphere. A journey to their towering heights seems possible and easy. Thus did Jesus gaze at the kingdom with unclouded eyes; and if we saw moral life with His clear and steady vision, we also might feel that the kingdom of God was ever impending, so that it might seem to be at our very doors. Hence it was possible for Jesus to speak of the slow growth of the kingdom without obscuring the sense of its nearness, a result which might have enfeebled the hopes and energies of His disciples.

Our survey of the Master's doctrine about the kingdom would not be satisfactory if we did not at least touch on the question of method. How is the rule of God to be established in human life? Must we fight for it, wait for it, or work for it? These three possible ways were certainly in the mind of Jesus, and His words seem to furnish sufficient light to enable a choice to be made.

The first method is that of fighting. It is the method of impatience; and Jesus gives both hints and plain injunctions against its use to found the kingdom. It was a method seriously proposed in the early first century as a means of realizing the kingdom. Its chief advocates were the Zealots, whose fervent religious patriotism sought any means to hasten the Messianic kingdom. They fomented many insurrections such as that under Judas the Gaulonite in 6 A.D. to which reference is made in Acts v, 37. Jesus was a boy of about thirteen years when this rising occurred, and must have been familiar with its cause and purpose, as well as with the fanatical violence which characterized the Zealot party. In fact He lived His whole life in this atmosphere of politico-religious unrest, and it is therefore highly probable that the form of His teaching was in part determined by this circumstance. If we read His sayings about resistance to evil in the light of these revolutionary movements,

we can understand better their uncompromising nature. Members of the Zealot party would often be among His hearers, and their doctrines had probably infected considerable sections of the populace. It was impossible for Jesus to ignore this element in the nation, seeing that His aim and theirs was the same, namely to set up the Messianic kingdom. Hence He opposed them, not only because their idea of the kingdom was national, as already indicated, but because their methods of violence and revolution were alien to His plan. When therefore He deals with cases of personal oppression and insult, such as a government official might visit upon individuals, He takes a strong stand on the side of forbearance and submission, as an antidote to the violent retaliatory spirit and method of the Zealots. That He had such people as the Zealots in mind is probable from Matt. v, 41, where He says, Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. This can only be an act of political oppression, as it refers to the government practice of commandeering individuals for pressing duty, such as the imperial messenger service. The Zealots would be the first to resist such demands on the principle that opposition to the rulers of the nation would hasten the kingdom. But Jesus repudiated this method of retaliation as being hostile to the interests

of the kingdom, and alien to the spirit of its genuine members. The strong and definite way in which He seems to proclaim a doctrine of non-resistance in these cases is perhaps due, not only to the eager violence of the Zealot spirit, but also to the fact that their resistance was excited as much by hatred to the Romans as by religious considerations. Such acts of personal retaliation and violent hatred could never advance the kingdom, and so were prohibited by Jesus for all time.

But it is necessary to notice one point in this connexion as we pass on. Jesus does not here condemn all use of physical means of resistance in any and every cause. He condemns the Zealot spirit of personal retaliation and violent efforts on behalf of the kingdom. The question of resistance for the sake of others, to save them from shame and death,—a resistance impelled by righteousness and love, and not by personal resentment—does not enter into the scope of such sayings as the above, and must be decided on the wider grounds derived from an adequate interpretation of the Christian conception of love. Bearing this in mind we may say that Jesus opposed the method of fighting to establish the kingdom. It was the ruling method of the Zealots, and grew out of a worldly conception of the kingdom which Jesus had definitely rejected on the occasion of the Tempta-

tion. He also affirmed the same position in His statement to Pilate, My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight (John xviii, 36).

The second method is that of waiting. This is the method of resignation. It also had its advocates in the quietist section of the Pharisaic party, as well as in the circle of the apocalyptists. These people were, for the most part, pious and orderly folk who had given the world up as a hopeless problem. It was so bad that no human effort could put it right. They were bewildered with its strange perplexities and its monstrous iniquity, and had renounced all idea of responsibility for its redemption. Moreover they were religious fatalists in that they believed that all things were predetermined by the will of God, and that the course of human history would be unfolded by Him in an exact and immutable order, until the glorious consummation should be ushered in to the accompaniment of awful portents such as earthquakes, falling stars, darkened suns, and crashing worlds. Then God Himself, or His Messiah, would set up the eternal kingdom and gather in His chosen.

As an example of adventurous imagination the conception is truly magnificent, and some of its elements might be accepted, if not too literally interpreted ; but the whole scheme is too mechanical, too destructive of all moral effort and

happy service, to harmonize with the mind of Jesus, or to appeal widely to the present age. These people remind one of an audience sitting placidly before a cinematograph film, watching with but few tears the momentous events which are hastening on to an awful climax. The spectacle is pathetic, but not inspiring. It is redeemed from unworthiness by the spirit of resignation ; but here, as ever, the resignation of fatalism can scarcely be held up for admiration.

Perhaps the best representation of this type of thought is to be found in 4 Ezra, which appears in the English Apocrypha as 2 Esdras. Though written nearly a century after the death of Jesus, it gathers up many of the hopes and ideas prevalent in His day. In the parts which discuss the problem raised by the suffering of the righteous it often strikes quite a modern note. The atmosphere is one of hopeless pessimism so far as the present world is concerned. Things are all awry, and any policy of re-construction is doomed to failure. The world is 'full of impotence and sorrow,' and must wait patiently the fast approaching day when the Omnipotent shall consume it and usher in the age of incorruption. The pessimism of the author, however, is not cynical and bitter ; it is sorrowful, bewildered, reluctant, whilst its gloom is relieved by gleams of noble compassion for his fellow men

in their desperate plight. We might imagine this man, under happier circumstances, finding a solution to his perplexities in the message and outlook of Jesus.

We are bound, however, to say that the method of waiting for the kingdom is not accordant with the intention and thought of Jesus. This is so because the method involves an almost non-moral idea of God's kingdom. It is to be an arbitrary creation of the divine will, established in the future, and in no sense due to the virtue and moral effort of mankind. But in the estimation of Jesus the kingdom is not merely a future state or place, but first of all, an actually present moral condition, which every man must enter by an act of moral freedom, and may progressively perfect by the exercise of moral effort aided by the grace of God.

This introduces us to the third method of establishing the kingdom, namely, that of working for it. This is the method of co-operation, and it recognizes that God calls for human energies in creating His kingdom. If God were to make a kingdom by His own arbitrary will, we should feel that it was not the most perfect kingdom possible. We should be able to conceive a better kingdom made by the divinely directed labours of free moral beings. In short, the kingdom of heaven includes two elements, namely, the sovereign rule of God,

and the moral perfection of humanity. But the latter is unattainable apart from man's free effort, and it is this which Jesus calls for in His message of repentance, in His demand for righteousness, and in His exhortations for service. He does not announce the kingdom as a heritage only, but He offers it as a sphere of toil. The rewards of the kingdom are for those who work in it, as is taught by the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard ; and the reward of work is more work, as is suggested by the parable of the Pounds, where the man who traded well with ten pounds is entrusted with the rule of ten cities. In such parables and in many isolated sayings we hear Jesus inviting us to moral effort. There is urgency and insistency in His tone. We must ' strive to enter in by the narrow door ' ; we must avoid being ' unprofitable servants ' ; we must ' work while it is called day.' There is not in these words any suggestion of idle waiting for the kingdom, but rather of a tense and eager struggle which it is shameful to refuse.

Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to the qualities which mark those who belong to the kingdom. They are merciful ; they hunger and thirst after righteousness ; they are makers of peace. Such qualities imply the expenditure of moral energy, and clearly show that to wait for the kingdom is to ignore its moral nature.

Finally, the universality of the kingdom is itself a call to service. That which is designed for all must be made available for all. Jesus pointed the way when He sent His disciples by twos on a mission tour of preaching and healing; and the Apostle Paul, recognizing the obligation to service laid upon him as a member of the kingdom, endeavoured by ceaseless toil to preach the gospel to the world. It is doubtless a commonplace to say that we must work for the universal kingdom, but it is one of those commonplaces which is too often relegated to quiet obscurity. And when it is asked to-day, 'Why does the kingdom tarry?' it can only be replied that there is delay because the ordinary Christian does not feel an insistent need of moral effort, expressing itself in prayer and labour, to secure the triumph of the Master's purpose.

CHAPTER IV

THE MASTER AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

IF the human side of the kingdom of God is the moral perfection of men, it was natural that Jesus should say much about righteousness. For on His lips righteousness meant moral perfection, though in a richer and deeper sense than had ever been understood before. The word was one of those which Jesus found ready to hand in the religious vocabulary of the time, a word hallowed by sacred associations, and also desecrated by narrow and worldly uses. The people were familiar with it in the teaching of the scribes, and in the living oracles of their prophets. In the former it was rigid and mechanical; it had the fusty and conventional atmosphere of the law about it. In the latter it was more elastic and vital, and was suggestive of the real experiences of moral life. It is in this prophetic idea of righteousness that the roots of the teaching of Jesus are to be found. Here, as elsewhere, Jesus honours the past by conserving and using its deposit of truth and wisdom. For this reason it is always advisable, in any study of His words, to take some kind of survey of what has been thought and said before.

To do this adequately would require an examination of the Greek and the Hebrew contribution to the subject. Such an examination is not within the proper scope of this essay, but those who desire to pursue the subject will find in Nettleship's *Lectures on the Republic of Plato* an excellent account of Justice from the Platonic point of view ; and in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* a full and careful survey of the idea of righteousness in the Old Testament by Dr. Skinner. A few words, however, on these prior conceptions of righteousness seem called for before proceeding to the teaching of Jesus.

In classical times both Plato and Aristotle use the same word for righteousness as that which appears in the New Testament. In a certain sense this Greek word δικαιοσύνη was used to include the entire range of right action. Thus Aristotle calls it ' perfect virtue,' but it had respect to one's neighbour, not to oneself or to God. In other words it was more directly a social virtue than an individual one. Plato includes it in his list of four cardinal virtues, but gives it a high place by making it regulative of the other three. In common usage, however, the word came to be understood in the narrower sense of justice, as in our use of the term justice when contrasted with righteousness. We shall see how the meaning

attached to it by Jesus differs from this in making righteousness more than a social virtue, and wider than distributive and corrective justice

In Hebrew thought the idea of righteousness receives various expression. Dr. Skinner calls it 'one of the most complex and difficult of the ruling ideas of the Old Testament.' It is there used in a legal sense, as well as in an ethical and a religious significance, which is natural in a nation whose entire life had relation to the will of God.

The emergence of this religious sense is especially seen in the prophetic ideal of righteousness. The prophets have a strong conviction that righteousness in the nation is demanded by the character of Jehovah. Both Amos and Isaiah (the former, implicitly) proclaim the inspiring message of God's righteousness to give force and insistency to their call for the same quality in civic life. No ritual claims, however long established and venerable, can outweigh the inexorable demand of righteousness. The sacred offerings and sacrifices are so many empty mockeries if judgement is not established in the gate.

Isaiah says that the ceaseless sacrifices are void of purpose, the multitudes jostling in the holy courts with vain oblations are an abomination, an encumbrance, and a weariness to Jehovah while iniquity and oppression flaunt themselves in the streets,

The attitude is equally uncompromising in the oracles of Amos. The 5th chapter is a passionate lament over the city that labours for the Day of the Lord by multiplying its burnt-offerings and meal offerings, while it hates him that reproveth in the gate, and abhors him that speaketh uprightly. To such a people 'shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?' The demand of Jehovah is for moral integrity rather than ritual correctness. 'I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies . . . but let judgement roll down as waters, and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream' (Amos v, 21-24).

In Amos and Isaiah righteousness is exhibited as a moral quality essential to the civic life of a nation that belongs to Jehovah. Later, the dissolution of the national unity led to the emergence, under Ezekiel, of the conception of individual righteousness. The destiny of each man was to be determined by the possession or the lack of this quality. The significance of the idea, however, was more and more qualified from this time onward by the emphasis laid upon the legal system, until in the time of our Lord righteousness was no longer regarded, in Pharisaic circles, as an inspiring moral principle by which life should be freely ordered, but rather as the exact fulfilment of traditional rules. In

other words, when Jesus began to teach, the moral righteousness of the prophets had been obscured by the legal righteousness of the scribes ; and this circumstance is clearly reflected in the doctrine of Jesus.

We are now in a better position to deal with what Jesus had to say about righteousness, and to show wherein He accepted and wherein He enlarged the conceptions of previous teachers. A convenient method will be to consider His teaching in connexion with outstanding sayings which represent its various aspects. In the early part of Matthew's Gospel (ch. v, 20) we meet with a saying which must have greatly astonished its first hearers. Jesus said, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

These words were a condemnation of the narrow legal righteousness in vogue among the Pharisees. On this Jesus waged war from the very beginning of His ministry. He required from His followers something more. Not that He asked for additional effort. In truth, the efforts of the Pharisees were continuous and earnest enough ; but they were misdirected, and based upon a restricted view of righteousness. We should perhaps bring out more sharply the point which Jesus emphasizes here if we were to read, 'Except your righteousness shall be

more abundant, &c.' The righteousness of the kingdom was an abounding, overflowing thing. Unlike that of the Pharisees, which expended and satisfied itself by the performance of this or that action, this new and higher righteousness would overflow in generous measure into all kinds of gracious qualities like mercy, purity, meekness and humility. It would not, of course, neglect the commandments, but it would fulfil them in a better way, thinking rather of the spirit of the action than of the action itself. It would not concern itself with the manifold duties of life in detail, but would foster that pure disposition in which all things would be done wisely and well.

The righteousness of Jesus exceeded that of the Pharisees by reason of its greater depth. It penetrated the inner life and affected the springs of conduct. Jesus taught that the heart was the source of good and evil deeds, and to have the heart right before God and man was the secret of true righteousness. It was therefore futile to cleanse the outside of the cup and platter if the inner parts were full of all uncleanness and iniquity. This inward aspect of the conception of righteousness emphasized by Jesus is that which gives it its highest value, and sharply differentiates it from the external righteousness of the Pharisees. In harmony with this, another mark of the true righteousness is brought out by our Lord.

In Matt. vi, 1, He says 'Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them.' This saying points to the unostentatious nature of the righteous life. Its expression in almsgiving and prayer must not be made a spectacle. The very idea of pomp and show in connexion with such gracious deeds was alien to the spirit of Jesus, and hence alien to the righteousness of the kingdom. To make a parade of goodness was to tarnish its loveliness, and to rob it of moral value. The members of the kingdom who seek the righteous life must be pre-eminently characterized by the modesty of a lowly spirit. This was the outstanding feature of Jesus Himself. The supreme beauty of His ministry, which has ever excited the reverent wonder of men, was due to the tranquil and unassuming nature of His loving deeds. More than in any other, the aspect of righteousness is in Him lighted with a gentle radiance and modesty which makes it attractive. The harsh and the boastful types of righteousness seen in some men are a declension from the perfect ideal of Jesus. This teaching, however, does not imply an undue approval of that secret goodness which is too sensitive of itself, and hides its light under a bushel in morbid fear of human praise. So long as outward righteousness is a genuine attempt to express the disposition of the heart, and seeks to glorify God, it need have no

fear of the taint of ostentation. We are not indeed taught by Jesus to be sensitive of the charge of ostentation, but to avoid the thing itself; and in true accord with this attitude is the familiar saying, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

Notwithstanding the modesty and lowliness of the righteous life, there must be no lassitude and coldness attaching to the desire for it or the practice of it. The word that Jesus utters in Matt. v, 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness,' is an indication of what He loves in His followers. There must be an enthusiasm for righteousness in our hearts; otherwise it will not enrich our life, and may not even be retained by us. Prof. Seeley has well said, 'No virtue is safe unless it is enthusiastic.' If virtues are only admired, and not fervently loved, they will often be neglected in favour of some more intense desire, such as the desire for personal pleasure. That is to say, the virtue is not safe because it has no intensity. Here then we see the reason why Jesus calls those blessed whose desire for righteousness is like a hunger and thirst.

It is fully in accord with the whole-heartedness of Jesus that He should take this attitude. When a lawyer quoted the old commandment, 'Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' Jesus approved the word and said, 'This do and thou shalt live.' And the latter part of that sentence must receive its due emphasis if we are to understand what Jesus meant. The only worthy love of God is with the whole heart. If it is cool and uncertain it is an unconscious slight upon God, and is in danger of extinction by the rough winds of the world.

The unheroic love, at once feeble and lifeless, which is bred of mere convention, and has no conviction and no passion, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. Such love will not take sides, or tries to take both sides, and that is impossible; for, as Jesus said, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' Now Jesus insists on whole-heartedness and intensity of love, because herein lies its power to exert influence and work changes. A flame of medium heat will never fuse a steel bar, however long it is applied; but if once the flame is raised to the required temperature the process of melting quickly begins. And in the work of the kingdom great moral changes are wrought by the righteousness which glows at white heat.

The last few paragraphs may perhaps seem to confuse righteousness and love, but this is almost unavoidable because in the teaching of Jesus the two terms often over-lap. It will be necessary

therefore, at this point, to ask how Jesus conceived the relationship between these two words. It is certainly very close, though the two are not identical. The supremacy must be given to love, but righteousness is an inseparable element of it. When we are considering what Jesus meant by them we should avoid making too sharp a contrast between them. In His teaching, love is always righteous love, and when He speaks of righteousness the context will generally show us that He means the righteousness of love. Dr. G. B. Stevens expresses the relation of these ideas by saying that 'righteousness appears to be conceived of as the different kinds of right action which have their spring in love.' Love therefore is the spirit which inspires and beautifies all right action, and without which actions cannot be called right in the highest sense. In the estimation of Jesus, a righteous man is one whose virtues are all rooted and grounded in love, and who exhibits those virtues in his life in harmonious proportion.

It will thus be seen from the foregoing thoughts that the conception of Jesus does not permit us to identify righteousness with justice in the narrower and more usual sense of that term. Justice is that which seeks an equitable distribution of good things in human society, and endeavours to fit penalties to offences. It may be true, even in this sense, that those are blessed who hunger and thirst

after righteousness; but the deeper meaning which Jesus gives to the word affords a more adequate reason for this beatitude. For in His view righteousness is not any single virtue, such as justice in the narrow sense, but the inward principle of all virtue, whose possession enables men to be true to themselves, to the community, and to God.

Moreover, when we use the term justice, we naturally think of right relations between man and man, and of an equitable government of human society; but when Jesus spoke of righteousness He included also a right attitude of the soul toward God. This difference makes it advisable to distinguish between justice and righteousness, and to employ the latter term, as Jesus did, for that deeper principle which secures the proper ordering of all the parts and relationships of life.

CHAPTER V

THE MASTER AND SIN

The problem of suffering is not nearly so acute as that of sin. The presence of pain in a good universe may clearly have a purpose contributing to the highest ends ; but sin is so utterly alien in a good universe that it must always be a mysterious problem that may be lightened, but never fully solved. So closely, however, does it affect the well-being of mankind that we must constantly seek to solve the problem of its suppression, even though we fail to explain its unwelcome presence in our world.

It is fortunate that Christian doctrine makes an honest attempt to deal with this problem. It frankly admits the reality of this dark fact, and offers a sane remedy whose value has been tested by the moral experience of thousands. Optimism in the face of evil is thus encouraged, and a glorious vision is offered of a final universe in which light is triumphant over darkness.

Christian optimism in the presence of sin has its source in the Personality of Jesus. An imperishable hope springs up within our hearts as we realize that this wondrous Personality came with the purpose of defeating sin and thus renewing the broken

fellowship of God and man. His claim to man's complete devotion does not lie in any contributions which He made to science, art, and civilization. It lies in His power to destroy the blight which spoils the fair fruits of human endeavour, and strikes at the heart of human happiness. In other words, men instinctively turn to Him because He is a Saviour, who utters the word and possesses the power that routs evil. Let us recall then, what the Master has to say concerning this sombre cause of unrest and woe.

There is no trace in His teaching of any discussion of the ultimate origin of sin, nor is there any direct treatment of the nature of sin, though its general character may be clearly discerned from His words about it. Evil impulses lying dormant, and the suggestions of the Evil One working upon them, are the sufficient cause of the actual sins of men. Beyond this Jesus does not seek to penetrate, since His purpose was not to explain the origin of the fires of evil, but to put them out. His doctrine is to be inferred both from His attitude and from His utterances. Taken together these furnish us with a deep and searching estimate of sin and its desolating power, whilst at the same time our hope is sustained by the doctrines of pardon and victory.

First, Jesus taught that sin is something essentially wrong within. Its seat is the heart of man; and

the heart stands for the inner life as a whole. The multitudinous evils of humanity have their common starting-point in the evil heart, and Jesus laid the axe at the roots of evil when He taught that the needful thing was to get the heart right with God. It is the pure in heart who have the vision of God. Just as righteousness is an inward quality which determines and pervades the outward actions of life, so also sin is something which has its source in the inward parts, and its manifestation in all kinds of discordant and unlovely deeds. The spirit of hate may issue in anger or murder, and the spirit of lust in adultery.

But in the searching teaching of the Master a man may be sinful even when his impulses do not issue in outward deeds. There is a desire of the heart which is dangerous and blameworthy ; and so long as a man remains uncleansed within, the correctness of his external deeds does not lift him out of the number of the transgressors.

From this teaching it follows that isolated actions cannot furnish clear evidence of the presence or absence of evil desires. The same action may be that of the benefactor or that of the assassin. The surgeon cuts with the knife in order to save ; the murderer in order to destroy. There are similar cases, not so clearly differentiated as this, which make it difficult to decide the exact quality of out-

ward actions ; and it was probably for this reason that Jesus warned His followers not to be eager to assume the position of the judge over their fellows.

The words of Jesus on this subject were partly determined by the attitude and doctrine of the Pharisees. He was at pains to show that whatever the outward manifestations of evil may be, they did not consist in the mere breaking of ritual and ceremonial laws, such as those concerning eating and drinking, and personal ablutions. They were to be detected in acts of pride, oppression and hatred against humanity, and in acts of hostility against the love of God. It was in those deeds which stultified love and embittered life that Jesus saw the awful malignancy of evil. The Pharisees, whose icy pride and contempt of men was clothed with conventional correctness, received greater condemnation at His hands than the publicans, who sinned with more violence but less bitterness. And the estimate of Jesus was right, inasmuch as selfish pride is the deadly blight which attacks love and spoils the beauty of life.

In the next place, Jesus recognized that sin has a dangerous power of swift development which may continue until the whole nature is hardened against every gracious influence. It may start from weak impulses of desire and pride, and end in terrible

manifestations of moral obduracy. Jesus, with His insight into the immense and awful possibilities of human nature, discerned this peril. He saw that sin, either by the neglect or the consent of men, gained momentum and established a growing power over the heart. This is implied by the parable of the man who neglected his moral life by leaving it empty, so that into the swept and garnished chambers the evil spirit returned with others more wicked than himself. In another place Jesus speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Probably the phrase does not refer to an isolated act, but rather to a moral condition of utter and unyielding perversity, in which all the powers of the soul are ranged against the divine love. One hesitates to think of any man falling into such a state, but history contains examples of cold-blooded cruelty and persistent malignity which justify the solemn warnings of Jesus ; and experience shows that the spiritual life has not only heights of purity, but also depths of wickedness in which the soul may utter the exultant cry, ' Evil, be thou my good ! '

Again, the Master accepted the Bible doctrine of the universality of sin. This is not stated in so many words, but His attitude proves that He considered all men as under the same evil dominion. He treats men as subject to its power and in need of

deliverance. Hence He utters a call to universal repentance. The righteous Pharisee, as well as the disreputable Publican, comes under this category. It is only the irony of Jesus that makes Him refer on one occasion to 'just persons that need no repentance.' His call to purity of life and perfection of love is not restricted to any class or nation. It is the 'moral imperative' which all men need to obey. His disciples are not exempt, and they are once referred to as 'being evil.'

There is perhaps no need to labour this point in the Master's teaching. Where sin is accepted as a fact it is generally assumed to be common to all mankind. The equality of man is nowhere more clearly exhibited than in the phrase, 'All have sinned.'

It is further evident from the attitude and teaching of Jesus that He had a keen sense of the reality of sin. To Him it was no mere shadow clouding life's splendour for the moment ; no trivial mistake that can be swiftly and lightly rectified, but an awful fact of experience which is responsible for misery and ruin in heart and home and nation. His feelings of sorrow and indignation are roused by sin's perversity. Once we read that He looked round upon His hearers 'being grieved at the hardness of their hearts ;' and we see His moral indignation leaping into flame in His scathing denunciation

of the Pharisees. (Matt. xxiii). Such strong emotions enable us to measure in part His sense of the reality of sin. Like all great prophets, but more unwaveringly, He saw that sin is a real problem, outreaching all other problems in importance and complexity. The average man is more concerned with suffering than with sin; but Jesus spoke oftener about the latter. His exquisite words of consolation to sufferers are very precious to us, but His words of warning about sin are charged with a solemn insistence which no wise man will ignore, and which help us to see what He considered was the source of mortal woes.

He thinks of sin as a kingdom of darkness opposed to the kingdom of light, and the battle is no spectacular tournament, but a real struggle, fraught with tremendous import. So He urges His disciples to beware of the powers of evil, and to strive earnestly to enter in at the narrow gate. His appeal is strengthened by the silent testimony of His own life and purpose. The assumption of sin's reality lies at the back of all that He did. The tears of Gethsemane, the public shame of the court-room, the agony of a death whose every phase was watched by curious eyes,—all these speak loudly of a real struggle with an implacable foe. Philosophical theories that make sin a passing twilight or a bad dream, seem utterly trivial in the light of Calvary.

They cannot stand in the face of the Master's experience of grief and abandonment, nor in the face of the bitter facts of common life. It is an immense gain to right thinking and morality that the doctrine of sin which emerges from the teaching of Jesus is based upon the real experience of men, and is not spun from the slender cobwebs of speculative philosophy. There is a philosophy of sin, but it is only valuable when it stands upon the solid rock of experience.

In spite of His strong sense of the reality of sin, Jesus never implied the necessity of sin. To Him it was an alien power, with no rightful place in man's heart. He taught that men belong to God, and with Him find their natural home. In the mind of Jesus it is an indescribably sad thing that the children of God should lie under the dominion of evil. There is an incongruity in such a situation which the love of Jesus resents and labours to alter. This resentment against sin's intrusion may be felt in the sharp word of command which Jesus gives to the demons who harass and confuse the soul, namely, 'Come out of him!' And the phrase marks the distinction which Jesus drew between the human personality and its evil tenant.

We may clearly infer from the teaching of His parables that He conceived of sin as making man a wanderer, lost on dangerous mountains ; a wastrel,

eating out his heart with despair in a foreign land ; an idle and useless servant, bringing no honour and profit to his lord. In fact, Jesus taught that a sinful life is a mere travesty of what life should be. It is an interference with the proper destiny of men, and the eternal purpose of God. And the fact that sin is not a necessary element in life makes the sorrow of Jesus deeper. He sees its ravages in the light of the glories that might be. It is ever so, that the suffering or the wrong that need not have been, is the cause of the most bitter grief. The lament of Jesus over the sins and obduracy of Jerusalem was keener because of His sense of the contrast between the ruin that might have been averted, and the blessings He could have bestowed.

The attitude of Jesus to sin as an alien power enabled Him to instil into men an optimistic view of the struggle against it. There is no need to deny its reality in order to get rid of it. Once its necessity is denied men may face it with a hopeful spirit. Jesus gives men this hope. He was conscious of forces resident in God, and working through Himself, that could triumph over sin, and His own victory He made the ground of hope for men. ' Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.'

His plan for the defeat of sin had at the heart of it the fact of forgiveness. He treated this as one of the assured things in the religious life. He

did not explain this philosophically, but He offered it freely to men in the name of God, and He pronounced it by His own divine authority. The possibility of such forgiveness carries with it the assurance that sin is not an abiding factor in the universe of moral life, and inspires the hope of ultimate victory ; for it is the doctrine of divine pardon that is the death-blow of sin. If sin were unforgiveable its reign would never end.

We have been treating here of the teaching of Jesus about sin ; but any explanation of the Master's relation to this dark fact must include also what He did. Sin cannot be defeated by wise words, even though they fall from the lips of Jesus. The sacred relationship which it has broken must be restored, and this can only be done by the power of an authoritative Personality who is able to speak and act for both God and man. Such a one we believe has come in Jesus Christ. The power of His sinless Personality and of His sacrificial love on Calvary becomes ours by spiritual union with Him, and bears us on into full salvation from the power of sin.

CHAPTER VI

THE MASTER AND THE SACRED DAY

JESUS was born among a people who held the seventh day of the week in special reverence. The detailed rules concerning the Sabbath had been slowly and painfully elaborated by generations of scribes, until in the time of our Lord they were a formidable and extraordinary system. Some knowledge of this legal system is needful for a proper understanding of the attitude of the Master to the Jewish Sabbath. For the form of His teaching about the Sabbath was influenced by the Rabbis just as the Apocalyptists influenced Him in setting forth His doctrines of the future.

The Jews from ancient times had received a commandment which bade them keep the Sabbath day holy, i.e. separate. It is the fourth in the decalogue, and runs as follows:—‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.’

Plainly, if this command is interpreted literally, it involves complete physical and mental rest. No work is to be done. The day is to be a memorial of the end of the creative work, when God ceased from His labours. Nothing is said about the obligation of worship. Rest for man and beast is the primary end in view. It is not an exaggeration to say that such a Sabbath has never been kept by Christian people, even in the strictest of Puritan times ; and it is doubtful whether the Jews succeeded in observing it literally, even in the rigid and dreary days of scribal authority.

The difficulties surrounding an absolute observance of the command—which absolute observance was surely not divinely intended—led to a gradual attempt to draw out its proper significance. This might have been done by observing the letter, or by observing the spirit of the commandment. The Scribes adopted the former course, and from the time of Ezra to that of our Lord they were conscientiously engaged in working out the details involved in the command. If a literal observance of the day was to become generally possible it was necessary to define what was meant by work. This led to wearisome discussions of unimportant details, and endless casuistry, calculated to astonish and even disgust the patient reader. A sense of humour alone can sustain one tolerably in these arid deserts

of legalism. But a brief consideration of them is necessary if we are to appreciate the uncompromising attitude of Jesus to the Sabbatarianism of the Scribes. Full particulars may be found in the Mishna, a work which illustrates the ingenuity of the Rabbis, as well as the pathetic endeavour they made to work out national salvation through legalism.

The ordinary reader will find a sufficient account in Schürer's classic, *The Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ* (Div. ii. vol. ii.). A few of the facts recorded will be enough to furnish an idea of the religious position which Jesus confronted when He set forth His teaching about the Sacred Day.

At the time when Jesus began to preach, Sabbath regulations had been fully elaborated. The Rabbis had decreed that there were thirty-nine kinds of work prohibited by the Law. These included such activities as sowing, ploughing, reaping, baking, washing, building, making a knot, untying a knot, lighting a fire, putting out a fire, &c.

But the minute and manifold inferences from these activities were even more perplexing and burdensome for practical life. Examples are :

‘To pluck a few ears of corn is reaping.’

‘One is guilty by reason of tying or of untying the knot of camel-drivers, and that of sailors ; but a woman may tie up a slit in her skirt and the strings of her cap.’

'Carrying was forbidden'; hence 'a tailor might not go out with his needle, nor a writer with his reed, nor a cripple with his wooden leg.'

'A fracture of a limb may not be attended to. If any one has sprained his hand or foot, he may not pour cold water upon it.'

'A ladder may not be carried from one pigeon-cote to another.'

'One may not climb a tree, ride upon a horse, swim in the water, clap with the hands, strike upon the hips, or dance.'

These typical inferences will serve to show the kind of religious prohibitions solemnly set forth, and fanatically maintained by the Pharisees in the time of Jesus. The conflict between Him and them was thus inevitable. He could never countenance such a peddling interpretation of the beneficent principle of the ancient law.

Characterized as He was by the sanity of true wisdom, and the fearlessness of a prophet, as well as vested with divine authority, He must needs declare the true conception of the sacred day. And so He appears in the Gospels as the champion of God's true day. With simplicity and freshness of speech, with keen dialectic, and with open boldness, He attacked the hoary prejudices of legalism in the interests of a sane and practical piety. Bearing in mind what He had to contend with, we perceive

that He was no blind iconoclast, breaking down images of error for the love of destruction, but the clear-sighted defender of the sacredness of the day. If He sought to change the established order, He did not do so because it was established, but because it was wrong.

As the sayings and incidents connected with the Sacred Day are sufficiently few to be brought within reasonable compass, we will set them out in full before examining the principles which are involved in them.

(1) *Incidents recorded in one or more of the Synoptic Gospels.*

Luke iv, 16-30 ; Mark vi, 1-6.

These passages describe the visit of Jesus to the synagogue at Nazareth. Luke says, 'He entered, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.' The two accounts possibly refer to the same event. If they are different, Luke's is probably the earlier. On this occasion Jesus delivered the manifesto of His ministry. He spoke with such 'words of grace' as to excite general astonishment, but He failed to overcome the narrow prejudices of the people and they cast Him out of their city.

Mark i, 21-28 ; Luke iv, 31-37

An incident in the synagogue at Capernaum.

One scene is evidently described in these two accounts. Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and healed a man with an unclean spirit, who openly recognized Him as 'the Holy One of God.'

No mention is made of opposition to His action on the part of the rulers. Probably at this early stage His work had not excited official notice; or the rulers were not quite certain what course of action to adopt, and were following the policy of 'wait and see.'

Matthew viii, 14-15; Mark i, 29-31; Luke iv, 38-39.

Leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered into Peter's house. Here He found the mother-in-law of Peter sick of a fever and healed her. The inference is that this miracle took place before the Sabbath was past; but there is again no mention of hostility to this breach of Pharisaic law. In each of the three Gospels there follows an account of various works of healing performed by Jesus as the sun was setting. As the Sabbath closed at sunset these miracles should not be regarded as instances of healing on the Sabbath. Whatever Jesus may have been willing to do, the people in general were not likely to contravene the Sabbatic regulations.

Matthew xii, 1-8; Mark ii, 23-28; Luke vi, 1-5.

This story relates what happened in the cornfields

on a Sabbath day. As Jesus and His disciples were walking along the path, the disciples began to pluck the ears of corn and eat them, rubbing them in their hands. Here we meet with the first recorded case of Pharisaic opposition to the attitude of Jesus. The incident reveals the petty nature of the legal rules respecting the Sabbath, as contrasted with the large-minded view adopted by Jesus. Because the disciples plucked and rubbed the ears of corn, the Pharisees held them guilty of reaping and threshing on the Sabbath! There is no need to justify the apparent indignation of Jesus. His reply, as handed down in Matthew's Gospel, is two-fold :—

- (i) He pointed out how David had invaded the sacred House of God and had eaten the show-bread, being thus guilty in a double way, seeing that none but priests could enter the holy precincts or eat of the consecrated loaves. But the law of hunger was stronger than the ritual law. The Pharisees had no condemnation for David. Why should they condemn the disciples for acting on the same principle ?
- (ii) He reminded them that the priests themselves did not observe the rules of the Sabbath in the Temple. Its courts were the scene of busy activity every Sabbath while the

victims for sacrifice were led, and killed, and prepared for the altar. These things, it is true, were done in the service of the Temple, and so were reckoned guiltless. But now there was One present greater than the Temple, and He announced to them the old truth that mercy is better than sacrifice; and therefore if Sabbath rules are suspended in the interests of sacrifice, as in the Temple, much more may they be in the interests of mercy, as in the case of the hunger of the disciples.

Matthew xii, 9-14; Mark iii, 1-6; Luke vi, 6-11.

Following on the above incident Jesus went into the synagogue and cured a man whose hand was withered. He prefaced the miracle with the acute question, 'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day?' This silenced the Pharisees completely, since there can be only one answer to such a question, and they were unwilling to give in. The Master is roused to indignation and exposes the inhumanity of their narrow prohibitions. They will have pity on a sheep! If it falls into a pit on the Sabbath day they will drag it out! But as for a sick man, they will defer their pity to save tradition!

In connexion with these incidents we have the first sign of active hatred on the part of the Pharisees.

They are now filled with madness and take counsel to destroy Him.

Luke xiii, 10-17.

Here Luke is alone in relating how on another Sabbath Jesus cured a woman of a spirit of infirmity which had bound her eighteen years. The miracle was wrought in a synagogue at some place not named. Such beneficence might have called forth universal praise and joy. But not so with the Pharisees! The ruler of the synagogue voices their indignation at this shocking profanity on the Sabbath. He roughly tells the crowd that there are six days for work. Let them come and be healed then, and not on the Sabbath. Jesus is deeply moved at their cruel and inconsistent attitude, and openly censures their hypocrisy. 'Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?' How much more then should a woman be set free from the bonds of Satan on the Sabbath!

This incident records a new feature in the mention of the open confusion of His adversaries, and the open rejoicing of the people.

Luke xiv, 1-6.

This passage relates the healing of a man who had the dropsy. It is similar in its teaching to the

story of Jesus and the man with the withered hand. But it has this marked difference, that it took place in the house of a Pharisee, into which Jesus had been invited to eat bread. This is suspiciously like a plot. The man had probably been brought in for a special purpose, and the Pharisees were watching to see how Jesus would act. He did not disappoint their evil expectations, and the man was healed.

The incident marks another advance in Pharisaic hostility. They are so eager to entrap Him that they prostitute the sacredness of hospitality to accumulate evidence against Him.

(2) *Incidents recorded in John's Gospel.*

John v, 5-18.

An impotent man, infirm for thirty-eight years, was lying at the pool of Bethesda, hoping to find health in its waters. Jesus came upon him and uttered the command which made him sound again. As the man went joyfully home with his bed on his back, the Jews upbraided him. For they had a curious Sabbatic rule. A bed might carry a man, but a man must not carry his bed. So this unfortunate man was in a dilemma. It was permissible to take him down to the pool on his bed, but when he was cured he must not carry his bed home again, because it was the Sabbath!

When the Jews learned that Jesus was the cause of this infraction of their tradition, they persecuted Him. Their hostility called forth a memorable reply from the Master. He said, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work.' By this He meant that the creative rest of God, which the Sabbath commemorates, is not idleness but activity, even an activity which maintains the material creation, and seeks to redeem and restore all things (*vide* Westcott's *St. John* on the passage.) Hence the Master claims to work as God does ; and men also may use the day of rest for redemptive labours.

John vii, 22-23.

In this passage Jesus does not enunciate any new principle not found in His other words about the Sabbath. He simply points out to the Jews how foolish it is to be angry with Him for making a man entirely whole on the Sabbath, when they themselves permit on that day the performance of a rite which was the symbol of a partial wholeness.

John ix, 1-16.

Coming out of the Temple Jesus saw a man blind from birth. Jesus significantly refused to be drawn into a discussion as to the cause of the blindness, but calling Himself the Light of the World, He made clay, annointed the man's eyes, and gave him sight.

The incident brings out, among other things, the perplexity of the Pharisees at the action of Jesus. Some of them openly say, 'This man is not from God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath.' But others hesitate to be driven so far by prejudice. So they are divided in opinion, yet remain united in policy.

(3) *Incidents outside the New Testament story.*

In a very interesting and valuable manuscript of the Gospels, known as Codex Bezae, which dates from the sixth century, there is a passage interpolated after Luke vi, 5, which has all the appearance of being a genuine saying of our Lord's. Such scattered sayings must have been abundant in early times, and many of them could not in the nature of the case find a place in the received Gospels. Their preservation would therefore be more or less a matter of chance. This one has been handed down by being inserted in an important manuscript. The passage reads as follows: 'And seeing a man working on the Sabbath day, He said unto him, O man, if indeed thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, cursed art thou, and a transgressor of the law.'

The words are a commendation of the man who, with a clear sense of moral responsibility, puts on one side the Sabbath law in the interests of some higher

law ; whilst they censure him who breaks the law at his own mere whim or pleasure, without regard to the sanctity of religious custom, and without a proper consideration of the moral consequences likely to be involved.

We, cannot of course, be quite certain whether Jesus actually uttered this saying, but it is in close accord with His style and attitude ; and in any case it is the expression of a principle which might well be pondered by those in modern days who ride rough-shod over the sacred day in mere idle opposition to an established institution, or at the call of their own selfish pleasure.

(4) *Noteworthy sayings of Jesus concerning the Sacred Day.*

Matthew xii, 8. ' For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'

Matthew xii, 12. ' Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day.'

Mark ii, 27. ' The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.'

With all the facts clearly before us, we are now in a position to estimate the character and scope of the Master's teaching on this important subject. The consideration of what Jesus said about the Sabbath, apart from the teaching of the Apostolic

Church, and apart from the changing attitude of the Christian Church in all ages, is likely to be advantageous, and is certainly consonant with the method of modern study, which is rightly inclined to lay special stress upon what Jesus Himself taught respecting the main themes of religious life.

First of all we notice that Jesus made no positive statement enjoining observance of the Sabbath. Indeed, a superficial reading of His life might lead one to suppose that He was not greatly concerned with maintaining its authority. But there are several considerations which tend to correct such a view. It must not be forgotten that He lived in an age when Sabbath observance was regarded as an essential of religious piety. He accepted and seems to have assumed the continuance of the practice. His teaching contains no hint that He desired the abolition of the sacred day; whilst on the other hand, His own example supports the use of it for purposes of teaching and worship. Luke tells us that 'He entered, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.' And there are several other places where it is recorded that He was in a synagogue on the Sabbath.

Next we observe that His controversies were conducted against the traditional idea of the Sabbath as developed by the Scribes, and not against the

principle of a sacred day. He repudiated the view that plucking ears of corn or carrying a bed was a violation of the ancient law. By doing this He in effect threw over the whole system of oral tradition built up by scribal labours. These traditions involved a literal interpretation of the Sabbath law which Jesus could not accept. His whole attitude as well as His teaching, clearly points to a spiritual conception of Sabbath obligations. Keeping the Sabbath does not mean for Jesus refraining from all work, or from certain specified kinds of work ; it means rather the worship and service of God. To him it was a holy day much more than it was a rest day.

The saying which occurs in John's Gospel, ' My Father worketh even until now, and I work,' indicates that He regarded the Sabbath as an opportunity of sacred labour.

Further, Jesus taught that the law of the Sabbath, especially as interpreted by the scribes, must give place to the claims of a higher law. The claims of health and of hunger might supersede those of the day of rest. Hence He fearlessly carried on His ministry of healing, and defended His disciples in the cornfields. The Christian Church has consistently followed the lead of its Master in this respect by recognizing the prior claim of health and of daily sustenance.

Such teaching was given by Jesus because He looked upon the Sabbath as man's day in the highest sense. 'The Sabbath was made for man.' It was to be an instrument of human good, an opportunity of human service, and a day of spiritual renewal. It was intolerable to Him that its blessings should be changed into burdens ; or that men should think to add to its holiness by imposing upon it a wearisome inactivity. The day must be the servant of man and not his despot.

There is one more saying of Jesus which may fittingly close this brief survey of His teaching on the Sabbath, namely 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.' That Jesus was referring to Himself in this phrase can scarcely be disputed. Thus He makes the claim to represent man and to rule the Sabbath. When He abrogates or modifies the ancient law, He does it with authority. But His action is not arbitrary or unmeaning ; it is in the interests of the spirit of the law and in the interests of men. He broke the letter of the law in order to maintain its spirit. In effect He substituted a moral privilege for a legal commandment. The early Christians followed a right instinct in observing the first day of the week rather than the seventh, and in making worship its characteristic mark. Thereby they ignored non-essentials and were true to the spirit of Jesus.

The sacred day of Jesus is better than the Jewish Sabbath because it is a day of worship and beneficent labour, and not a day of barren inactivity. A man might keep the strict Jewish Sabbath and not be any the better for it; indeed his idle hands might find relief in mischief. But a man could scarcely observe the sacred day of Jesus without being uplifted and strengthened.

In view of the value of this sacred day, and the importance of maintaining its place in modern society, it may be profitable to take note of a few practical considerations.

First, our appeal to the present age must not be based upon the fourth commandment, but upon the moral authority of Jesus. Men who are not interested in the laws of the ancient Jews are often deeply interested in the teaching of Jesus. What Jesus said and did will be more likely to move them because they feel that He was reasonable and tolerant. Whatever we may say, a trace of narrowness and Pharisaism attaches to the Jewish law which men do not find in the words of the Master. This age, which is an age of freedom from dogmatic authority, prefers to be guided by principles rather than rules. It will listen somewhat coldly if we hurl commandments at it, whilst it will give heed more readily if we point to moral privileges which enrich the soul.

In other words, it is no use going to men with the

assertion that to work on Sunday is wrong ; we must go to them with the declaration that to worship on Sunday is their privilege. This indeed is the position which the better informed Christian opinion takes to-day, though in some circles the cant of Pharisaism still prevails and works harm. Next, we must more freely recognize that we have no right to impose our ideas of the sacred day upon people who do not accept the obligations of the Christian religion. We would not seek to do this in dealing with a Hindu population, nor should we seek to do it in the case of an English population. This means that indiscriminate charges of 'Sabbath-breaking.' and 'Sabbath-desecration' should be avoided, and attention turned to positive teaching of a persuasive kind aimed at educating men to see the supreme blessings of a well-ordered Sabbath.

Further, whilst we should avoid giving the impression that our cessation from work on the Sabbath is a virtuous and meritorious act on our part, we should at the same time maintain that the stoppage of ordinary labour is a practical necessity for the truest observance of the day. In a very simple state of society it might be possible to keep the sacred day without a general stoppage of work, inasmuch as rest is secondary, and worship is primary in the Christian Sunday ; but in a complex civilization such as ours it seems

necessary to provide a general rest if there is to be habitual corporate worship. Now to advocate this cessation of work on the ground that Sunday labour is morally wrong, is not justified by the teaching of Jesus. Moreover it places us in the difficult position of urging something contrary to the practice of Christian people in general. To take an example, Christian households commonly prepare meals and perform similar duties on the Sabbath. No amount of casuistry can take these things out of the category of work. And Christian Churches allow their caretakers to stoke fires on the Sabbath, which is not essentially different from the fireman's duty on the engine. In view of this it is simply absurd for the pulpit to condemn Sunday labour indiscriminately as 'Sabbath desecration.' Therefore in our advocacy of Sabbath rest our surest ground is to be found in physical and social considerations, since these afford an almost unanswerable basis of appeal.

The next step will be to urge, as strongly and persuasively as possible, the obligation of using the day of rest for the highest ends; for mental and spiritual improvement, for religious worship and religious work. Here we have behind us the full authority of the Master, and can speak with greater conviction because supported by the word of Him who both loved men and understood their deepest needs.

It will not be difficult to go on and support the Christian call to corporate worship. We can point to the example and teaching of Jesus. We can show how experience favours it, and how the social instincts of men are in harmony with it. To do things together is a human instinct. Men play together, and work together. They meet together for scientific, artistic, and political purposes. It is much more necessary that they should meet together for purposes of religion. This, however, cannot be done on any adequate scale without special arrangements such as the institution of Sunday provides. On these lines we may make our appeal to the modern mind, confident that our position is both strong and reasonable, and supported by the divine authority of Him who said, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.'

CHAPTER VII

THE MASTER AND THE SOUL

THE great discoveries of the world are not complete unless they include the discovery of man by Jesus Christ. Moral virtues and intellectual powers had often called forth astonishment and admiration. Human achievements had often been assessed at high value by thinkers and historians; but no great teacher until Jesus came had conceived the real value of human personality in itself. The emphasis was placed by Him, not simply on human powers and virtues, but upon man himself as the creation and object of God's love. There had been, it is true, a movement of Greek and Hebrew thought toward individualism in the century preceding His appearance, but it was left to Him to bring into light and prominence the indistinct notions of the age, and to set in true perspective the preciousness of the soul.

Jesus did not talk about the soul in the language of philosophers. In accordance with His general habit, He used the common speech of ordinary men, so that farmers, fishermen, and carpenters felt the freshness and power of His word, and experienced a new sense of dignity and hope. The

average student of the Gospels, therefore, will not find much profit in examining minutely the psychological terms used by Jesus. It will be enough for him to remember that the word translated in the Gospels as 'soul' or 'life' is used by Jesus to signify the inner part of man's nature, that which is of highest and most abiding value. To this we may give the name 'soul,' without binding ourselves to any particular theory of its nature and properties.

But the Master's estimate of the soul cannot be dissociated from His estimate of human nature as a whole. He placed high value upon man as man. His fine consideration and genuine reverence for men displayed itself in His every act and attitude. Even the physical nature of man was invested by Him with a high dignity. 'The body,' He said, 'is more than raiment.' Though He allowed the practice of fasting for appropriate ends, He never countenanced any extreme severity to the body, or held up an ascetic ideal. His teaching on purity and marriage plainly shows that He regarded the physical nature of man as worthy of reverence and honour. Once He spake of the 'temple of His body'; and He would have approved the word of the apostle who said 'Ye are God's temple.'

This attitude to the body only serves to emphasize the special value which He placed upon the inner

life of man. The possession of a soul gave men a supreme position in the world. The Gospel records bring out the following points in His doctrine:

(1) Jesus put men far above the animal creation. In rebuke of the Pharisees, who had more concern for the beasts than for a sick man on the Sabbath, He said 'How much, then, is a man of more value than a sheep.' And on another occasion He comforted His disciples by saying 'Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.' The providence which had devised a natural system to maintain the life of birds and beasts would not fail in its care for the higher life of man. With wonderful simplicity and radiant confidence Jesus taught how sure was the providence of God over men; and in doing this He conveyed a conception of man's value for God which has raised the standards of life and conduct wherever His teaching is honoured.

(2) Jesus taught that men are more valuable than institutions. When debating about the most sacred day of Judaism He said, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'; a revolutionary saying which conveys a strong impression of His estimate of human value. The feasts, the fasts, the institutions of His country received no such honour and consideration from Him as did the humblest and most forsaken of men. He taught the world what it is a long time learning, that its

properties in stone and marble, and its traditional systems, are less valuable than its treasure of human life, and that unless buildings and institutions minister to the interests of man they are but of trifling worth.

(3) Jesus esteemed men as of greater value than wealth. He taught that the true life of a man far outweighed the value of the world. There was no conceivable thing which was an adequate exchange for a man's soul. If that were damaged or lost no accumulation of wealth could set the matter right. In his story of the wealthy landowner who prospered exceedingly, and used his opportunities of leisure to build larger granaries for his gathered wealth, so that his days might be spent in selfish luxury and ease, He brings out vividly the futility and loss which accompany the neglect of the soul. 'Thou fool, this night they shall demand thy soul of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' In His answer to the ruler who sought to win eternal life, He did not hesitate to counsel the abandonment of wealth in the interests of moral perfection. There is no trace in the Master's tone that He was doing an extraordinary thing in suggesting this drastic course, or of any idea that His hearers might be surprised at the demand. It was a simple and natural instinct in Jesus to regard the soul as incom-

parably more precious than wealth, so that even the abandonment of possessions would be no real hardship if only the soul were saved thereby. In the account of this incident we are told that Jesus 'looking on him, loved him,' and then made His great demand; which suggests that love dictated the sacrifice, and if the sacrifice seems great, it is only the measure of the value which the Master placed upon the soul.

(4) Jesus taught that suffering is worth while if endured for the welfare of the soul. The eye or the hand that is a stumbling-block to the attainment of life must be sacrificed. The startling figure of speech which Jesus here uses indicates with what force and reality He pressed the claims of the inner life. Great tribulations and self-denial were preferable to the injury or loss of that priceless possession. This teaching is no warrant for those mechanically inflicted tortures of the fanatic which were resorted to in the Middle Ages; but it does call us to an unflinching renunciation where spiritual interests are imperilled. A material life secure in the enjoyment of luxury and ease is no compensation for an impoverished soul. The destitution of Lazarus is less dangerous in the long run than the comfortable ease of the Rich Man.

Jesus did not accept as permanent the presence of unnecessary suffering, and laboured to banish

the afflictions and disease of men by His kindly ministry of healing ; but when the choice lay between suffering and the soul's impoverishment He did not hesitate to counsel and accept the former. The old saying that it is better to suffer under wrong than to do wrong would have received the stamp of His approval, because the former may strengthen the soul, whilst the latter enfeebles it.

(5) Jesus declared that every soul is precious. His sayings and His habitual attitude make it quite clear that He believed in the essential value of the most forsaken and abandoned soul. With serene assurance He preached the solicitude of God for the most insignificant. 'It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.' His recognition of the real value of souls was rendered emphatic and public by His thoughtful care for those whom others despised. He was the friend of publicans and sinners, not because He was moved by any narrow class-favouritism, but because His divine insight saw the abiding worth of their humanity. His appreciation of the soul's value appears in His considerate dealings with the woman of Samaria, Zacchaeus the publican, the woman in Simon's house, and the thief on the cross.

We are told that He knew what was in man ; and the saying explains, in part, His intense yearning

to redeem men. He knew the heights and depths, the golden possibilities of the soul. What others ignored, or did not see, was clear to His penetrating glance. He discerned the children of God in besotted and outcast men and women. The exclusive notions of Jewish Rabbis, Greek philosophers, and Roman senators, as to the special value of certain races or classes, were alien to His universal sympathies and unerring sense of human worth. If there was an aristocracy of souls in the thought of Jesus, it was not made by birth, but rather by re-birth. The Master's estimate of men has uplifted many a soul and many a race. It is no small factor in His redemptive purpose; for men have an impulse to fulfil the expectations of others concerning them.

The missionary motive in modern times springs from this conviction of the soul's preciousness, rather than from any idea of its immediate danger. In so far as this is true, we have recovered to-day the ruling motive of Jesus, whose spirit was pervaded with an overwhelming sense of the preciousness of life.

(6) Jesus taught that souls may be lost and found. His keen sense of the soul's value gave insistence and solemnity to His warnings about the perils besetting the soul. He spoke of damage, injury, and loss as possibilities confronting the soul. He spoke of souls that may perish. This aspect of

His teaching is illustrated by a wealth of beautiful sayings and parables which breathe the pathos of regret at the contemplation of life lost, or spoiled for high uses. It is felt, rather than expressed, in the famous words, 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost'; and it pervades the matchless story of the Prodigal Son.

But we must not import a sense of finality and hopelessness into the meaning of the word lost, as used by Jesus. He came to *save* the lost, and this declaration in itself is a proof that the state of 'being lost' is one from which men may be delivered. Thus the message of Jesus is lit up by a sane and steady optimism, which stands in glorious contrast to the hopeless pessimism of His age. The story of the Lost Son, with its record of selfish prodigality, shameful riot, and pitiable destitution, has a happy ending in the exultant joy of the father who says, 'This thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.' And in general the teaching of Jesus is permeated with a buoyant hopefulness and a happy confidence, in spite of widespread evil and human perversity. He sees the fields white already unto harvest, if only labourers would throng to the work; and His own purpose of redemption was carried on with an unbounded faith that in the end He would draw all men unto Himself.

(7) Jesus worked on the great assumption that the life of the soul is endless. This subject will be found treated in more detail in a subsequent chapter. Here it will be sufficient to say that His estimate of the soul would not have been so lofty apart from the idea of immortality. The splendour of its destiny, and the almost infinite range of its moral possibilities, immensely enhanced its value, and furnished an adequate motive for that supreme sacrifice on Calvary, which ever remains at the centre of man's life, uttering its message of Eternal Love, and whispering hope to every human soul.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MASTER AND IMMORTALITY

THE love of life is one of the most deep-seated and persistent impulses of the soul. In some people it reaches a high intensity. In all it is more or less present. It finds universal expression in the instinct of self-preservation. This impulse is behind the wistful yearning of mankind for the continuity of life, and for some assurance that, in spite of the fact of death, life after all will be finally triumphant in the universe. The strength of this desire is evident in the religious beliefs of all ages and nations, and furnishes in itself a solid hope that the aspirations of men will be fulfilled. Even where the present life is meagre, disappointing, and tragic, so as to give rise to the hopeless cry, 'Life is not worth living,' there yet persists the unexpressed conviction that under happier conditions it might still be good to live. Probably most men feel that there is a certain inherent dignity and richness in life which is worth preserving in spite of all that seems adverse. The words of Milton

in 'Paradise Lost' will certainly touch a deep chord in most hearts.

Who would lose, though full of pain, this intellectual being,
These thoughts that wander through eternity?

Among the Jews before the exile this desire found but scant expression in their religious ideas. For the most part they lived without the bright and buoyant hope of life's unending future and ever-growing wealth; though we must not forget that the hope itself was implicit in their deep sense of fellowship with Jehovah. Yet when all is said, the Old Testament presents a striking contrast to the New Testament in its attitude to the destiny of human life. The former is vividly conscious of the present, the latter of the future; the former thinks of death as an introduction into a world of shadow, the latter regards it as the way into a world of splendour. This difference led in the past to an exaggerated estimate of the Christian contribution to the doctrine of a future life. It was supposed that the teaching of Jesus was almost entirely new in Judaism; but the comparatively recent spread of knowledge concerning inter-canonical times has enabled us to arrive at a more accurate view. By means of the study of apocalyptic literature we can trace the rise and development of the doctrine of the future life among the Jews, from the time of Ezra to the days of our Lord.

We are thus in a better position to estimate how far Jesus accepted the ideas of His time, how far He modified them, and how far He made a new contribution to the doctrine of immortality.

It will not therefore be out of place to preface the study of the sayings of Jesus on this subject by a brief sketch of the doctrine of the Apocalyptists. First, what is an apocalypse? It is a revelation; and the term 'apocalyptist' is thus applied to those writers who claimed to have revelations concerning God's purpose in the world. They appeared somewhere about the year 200 B.C. and their writings cover a period of three centuries. They sought to fill the gap left by the silence of prophecy, and to provide a new message of hope and consolation to all righteous sufferers. The old problem of suffering was the question which they attempted to solve. The Book of Job had grappled with it, and had maintained the view that suffering is not necessarily due to individual sin, but in the end had only offered the orthodox comfort that the righteous should have 'manifold more in this life.' The oracles of Isaiah had gone a step further in showing that there is a heart of goodness in suffering, since it may often be vicarious, and so designed to operate for the good of others.

Later the Apocalyptists attempt a new solution. They lift their gaze from the present, and from the

interests of Israel as a nation, and take a sweeping view of the future and of God's advancing purpose in the world. They taught, not only that the lot of the righteous was unsatisfactory and perplexing, but that the entire scheme of things was wholly bad and destined to pass away. 'The fashion of this world perisheth' very aptly expresses their standpoint. Good people must set their hope on the new order of things which God would usher in at the appointed time—and that time was nigh at hand.

In their eschatological scheme these seers gave an important place to the individual. The sense of personal responsibility, developed among the Jews under the steady pressure of Hellenism, influenced the Apocalyptists, and they captured the popular imagination, as well as satisfied a legitimate desire by envisaging a happy future for the righteous individual. The sorrows of the present would receive blessed compensation in the felicities of the 'age to come.'

This outlook upon individual destiny led to the parallel development of the doctrine of the resurrection. An early statement of this is to be found in the book of Daniel (xii, 2), 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,' &c. And the other Apocalyptic writers express the same hope, with many differences of detail. Some teach the resurrection of the body, some the immor-

tality of the spirit ; some the resurrection of the just only, some of the just and the unjust. In some books it is confined to Israel, and in others it embraces all mankind.

In the Ethiopic book of Enoch, which is perhaps the most important of these writings, the doctrine of resurrection is clearly expressed, 'And the spirits of you who have died in righteousness shall live and rejoice ; and their spirits shall not perish nor their memorial from before the face of the Great One, unto all the generations.'

Following naturally from the doctrine of individual resurrection came the conception of rewards and punishments. The bewildering injustices of the present world would be set right by the happy lot granted to the righteous soul and the grievous doom of the wicked. It will be sufficient to quote once more the book of Enoch : 'All goodness and joy and glory are prepared for them, and written down for the spirits of those who have died in righteousness.' And concerning the wicked it is said, 'Woe unto you sinners when ye have died, if ye die in the wealth of your sins know ye that their souls shall be made to descend into Sheol, and they shall be wretched in their great tribulation.'

This school of writers is important to us, not because we can have much sympathy with their

fantastic visions, too highly coloured and artificial for modern perceptions, or with their mechanical view of world-history, but because their ideas form part of the religious background of the Christian Gospels, and because their widespread popularity made them a factor to be reckoned with when Jesus sought to instruct and illuminate the hearts of men.

It is not too much to say, also, that these writers were among the unconscious heralds of Jesus in so far as their doctrines pointed to His more spiritual teaching. Certainly their insistence upon the moral destiny of the individual, and the way in which they quickened immortal hopes, made possible the proclamation of the good tidings of personal redemption in a more effective manner than would otherwise have been the case. Moreover their books provided certain religious phrases and ideas of which Jesus made use in His eschatological and ethical sayings. For example, the familiar phrases, 'the resurrection of the just,' 'the world to come,' 'the Son of Man,' and several others, are taken over from them by our Lord. And the ideas of a coming kingdom, a world-judgement, and rewards and penalties, which find so large a place in the teaching of Jesus, appear in the apocalyptic books.

This connexion is an almost natural consequence

of the great popularity of the apocalyptic literature. It was a style of writing much in vogue then, just as the letter, the essay, the drama, and the novel have been 'the rage' in other times. Its authors were in touch with the people, and appealed to the popular mind, partly because they wrote as laymen, and not as professional scribes, and partly because they offered an answer to the questionings of the individual soul. Such a literature must needs have won the attention of Jesus, who Himself was a man of the people, and came to minister to their deepest needs.

Opinions vary as to the extent of the connexion between Jesus and the Apocalyptists. Some make it very close and thorough, but the balance of evidence at present seems to point merely to the use of common phrases and ideas, which on the lips of Jesus received a new and enlarged spiritual significance. In other words, whilst the teaching of the Apocalyptists served as a religious background for Jesus, and furnished Him with a convenient basis of moral appeal, He purged it from its materialistic elements, and gave greater power and purity to its other-worldly hopes by basing them on the love of a Heavenly Father instead of on the arbitrary power of a Sovereign King.

With these brief remarks on the popular religious sources with which Jesus was in touch, let us now

turn to His own teaching. Our purpose here is not to examine all the details concerning last things which the Gospels present, but simply to set forth the attitude of Jesus to the future hopes of men, how He presented His doctrine, and upon what foundation He laid it.

The attitude to immortality which marked Jesus was that of supreme certainty. He does not face the question like a scientist laboriously seeking intellectual grounds for a somewhat uncertain hope; nor like a distracted soul tossed between confidence and doubt. The usual arguments in support of man's desire for life beyond find no place in His teaching. He does not seek to bolster up immortal longings by learned disquisitions, like that of Plato, on the nature of the soul. Whether the soul is simple or compounded is a matter outside the purpose of His sayings. He has sources of confidence far deeper than these logical and philosophical aids to belief, and thus He confronts men with a tranquil serenity in refreshing contrast to the bickering clamour, for example, of the Rabbinic schools. The consoling word of Jesus in John xiv, 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions [places of rest]; if it were not so, I would have told you,' is a good example of that divine self-confidence which was the perennial atmosphere of His ministry. The crowds who listened to His

impressive speech described this confidence by saying, 'with authority' He speaketh.

The authoritative certainty of Jesus on this subject did not proceed from reasons which He had gathered and weighed, but chiefly from His own Personality. He had immortality in Himself, and the consciousness of this once made Him say, in the very presence of pitiless death, 'I am the resurrection and the life'—a saying which still excites us with its magnificent assurance whenever we hear it by the quiet graves of our beloved.

May we stop a moment to marvel at this phenomenon? Humanly speaking here is a Galilean peasant with none of the social and educational advantages which men prize; with no worldly circumstance to invest Him with authority. Yet He touches with a master-hand the deep problems of life, dissolves the uncertainties of the soul, and gives living reality to the unseen world. It is not surprising that some who first knew Him as 'Jesus the Carpenter' at last recognized Him as 'Jesus the Christ.'

Our next step is to examine His teaching about immortality, and the way in which He set it forth.

Jesus did not build His doctrine into a system. Neither in this nor in other themes is there a trace of what may be called scholastic order. He was not a professor, but a prophet, though far be it

from us to suggest that the two are incompatible. Yet He had a natural order of His own, like the living order of the flowers and forests.

With tranquil simplicity He unfolded the certainties of His heart about the life to come, using private conversations, short sayings, parables and miracles to convey the truth. For the most part His teaching is implicit, giving force and value to His words on other matters. When He weighs the soul and the world in His true balance, saying 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?' we feel it as the word of one who assumes that life is immortal. The same assumption lies behind His exhortation to His disciples, 'And be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul' (Matt. x, 28). Again, when He says to a wealthy ruler, 'Sell that thou hast, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;' or urges His followers to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven; or affirms of the man who confesses Him, 'Him will I also confess before my Father in heaven,' we naturally ask ourselves what point there could be in such words except on the assumption of the permanence of the soul.

Often He speaks of rewards and penalties, such as point to the reality of 'the work to come.' If men make good use of present opportunities they

render themselves fit to be received into the 'eternal tabernacles.' If they show that callous selfishness and indifference toward the lot of the wretched which is the peril of great possessions, they will find that Eternal Justice will put the balance right in that world where judgement is according to truth.

On one occasion at least, Jesus was confronted with a problem of resurrection. It was only a triviality of Sadducean debate, but Jesus made it the opportunity of affirming that 'the dead are raised,' and of presenting a spiritual view of the nature of the resurrection. In this connexion He argues from the name of God to the continued existence of the patriarchs. If God says, 'I am the God of Abraham, &c.' the name implies that Abraham lives. The form of the argument may not carry the same conviction to modern minds as it did to the minds of the Jews who listened, but the conclusion is a clear affirmation of our Lord's, 'Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (Luke xx, 27-40).

The standpoint of Jesus respecting the future is further made clear by His attitude toward death. To the sorrowing, this is a feature of His ministry full of consolation. He clothes this dark experience with forms of beauty. The monstrous and grisly pictures of death which are so common in some

pagan religions, and in some forms of art, have no support from Jesus. He treats death, not as a thing to be feared, but as a quiet sleep which ends with sunrise.

This attitude comes out in all the beautiful details of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. The loud wailing of the professional mourners is distasteful to His soul. It is like the noisy babbling of a shallow brook. He knows also how needless it is. 'Why make ye a tumult, and weep? The child is not dead, but sleepeth.' The words are greeted with scornful laughter, but He continues to act on the same astonishing assumption. He will have no curious crowd in the privacy of the child's room. He goes to tell her that it is morning, and time to begin another day. It is a happy circumstance that in Mark's account of the story the words of Jesus to the child are preserved in Aramaic. It is perhaps not too much to suppose that they represent the simple words familiar in the home, the words which the mother used each morning as she touched her child to wake her out of sleep, 'Little maid, get up!'

In the Fourth Gospel the incident of the raising of Lazarus gives a picture of Jesus moving with serene quietness to the help of His Bethany friends. Sickness and death do not hurry His feet because to Him they are but passing phases in life-experience.

He knows what death is. It is not the point of annihilation, but a swift period of re-invigoration. 'Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.' The disciples draw the inference which Jesus suggests. 'Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover.'

That the Synoptists do not mention this striking incident need not compel us to put it in the category of the unhistorical. It may not have had the importance that it assumed later, and which we discern in it. To those who first recorded the works of Jesus it possibly appeared as only one example out of many of the Master's power over death. Moreover, it harmonizes with the attitude of Jesus towards death which the other Gospels present. In the street, in the home, on the cross, in the tomb, He is King over death. Like a slave without authority it retires at the command of the Master.

But we have not exhausted the teaching of Jesus on Immortality by considering His confident assumptions, His references to future rewards and penalties, to the temporary character of death and to resurrection. All these do indeed imply the continuance of conscious life, but something more is involved in the full Christian conception of immortality. The emphasis of Jesus is laid on quality of life rather than on mere duration. Once

He said, 'I came that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly' (John x, 10). The saying clearly suggests that Jesus came to bestow a special kind of life; and this is implied also in the phrase, 'eternal life,' so often heard on the lips of our Lord. Mere duration can be a very boring thing. An immortality of moments is a thought which, in itself, drives men towards madness. Unless the limitless extent of life is filled with a limitless splendour, immortality is but a doubtful boon. If a man were promised five years at Dartmoor, it would be a matter of considerable interest to him to know first, whether the promise referred to life in the gaol or life on the moors. In other words, was it to consist in attenuated moments, or in abundant reality? The former has aptly and rightly been described as 'doing time.' There are human beings in the ordinary world whose idea of life has become so paltry and enfeebled that to them it simply consists in 'doing time.' It is small wonder that they fall easy victims to the dreary philosophy of the Preacher whose mournful theme was, 'Vanitas vanitatum.'

The philosophy of life which lies behind the spirit and teaching of Jesus provides for such things as righteousness, truth, and love, as the necessary elements in immortality. We may freely confess that Jesus did not discover for men the fact of

immortality; but He unfolded its richness and invested it with the highest quality, so that 'life in Christ' is felt by all who experience it as the perfect type of immortality. This is probably what Dr. Salmond means when he says of Christ (*Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 393), 'His gift to men is not the inculcation of the truth of an endless existence, not any dogma of the soul's deathless perpetuity, but the revelation of a higher life, and the inspiration of a hope stronger than all speculation, sacredly governing conduct, and accessible to the humblest soul.'

A few words must now be said as to the foundation of the Master's certitude of immortality. He goes deeper than the ordinary supports of reason and bases immortal hope on the changeless love of God. His unbroken fellowship with the Father gave Him an insight keener and more steadfast than that of men. With unerring wisdom He lays down the broad foundation of man's endless hopes. The care of the Father, expressed by Jesus with such exquisite beauty and tenderness, is not a temporal but an eternal providence. When Jesus said, 'But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows,' He was thinking of God's enduring love. And when He said, 'Be not anxious for the morrow, 'we may justly claim that His words take in,

not only the morrow that comes after night, but the morrow that dawns after death. Jesus taught a perfect confidence in the Father's love. His life and words bear united testimony to this love as the most real of all things. And when frail men catch His serene confidence, they journey through the shadows and mysteries of life with strengthened hope, hearing Love's voice,

Which whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

This is the most solid foundation of man's immortal longings. Other reasons may be advanced, but they are secondary and incomplete. If we possessed no other basis, and had no glimpse of other reasons, we could still rest our eternal hopes on the Eternal Love.

When modern Spiritualism offers to men its messages and voices from the Beyond in proof of the immortal hope, even if its claims were fully authenticated, their evidence would be only of a secondary character, and would add nothing new to the Christian assurance. The ultimate and sufficient basis of that is the reality of Divine Love.

It is perhaps not too much to say that the pledge of love which Jesus gives in support of human immortality is a new contribution to this important doctrine. Among the ancient Greeks Plato was the most notable exponent of theories concerning the

future life. His arguments are chiefly metaphysical, and may be read in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and other works. He bases the immortal hope on the nature of the soul, but his reasonings are too subtle for ordinary minds to appreciate. This golden hope could never have become 'current coin' by means of the Platonic arguments. As for the Apocalyptists, they seem to base their hope on God's omnipotence, on His favouritism for Israel, or on the good works of men. But none of these considerations can afford an absolutely sure ground for human hopes. God may cease to exercise the power that keeps the soul alive. His favouritism may find another object; and meritorious works done in a finite world cannot possibly be the ground of an infinite reward.

When, however, the Apocalyptists suggest that the future world is designed to vindicate God's righteous purposes, and to establish before men the connexion between righteousness and prosperity, their hope is based on more moral grounds. Here we discern a position similar to that which Kant adopted later, when he advanced the theory that immortality is essential to assure men of the unity of virtue and happiness. There is, admittedly, a large element of truth in this position, but it requires the Christian foundation to make it safe. For we ask, Why should God wish to vindicate Himself to men,

and to show that righteousness is ultimately blessed ? And the answer is, because He is Love, and it is love alone that yearns for perfect understanding. A just man may go on in cool indifference to the opinion of his fellows, but a man of love will rightly seek that personal communion with them in which all misunderstanding is at an end. So also the Divine Love will ever seek a perfect communion with its children, in which there shall be a perfect understanding. To this great end, Eternal Love will keep the soul eternally alive. This is the charter of our immortality. It is not Power only, but love that preserves our conscious life. And the love of God does not falter. As Francis Thompson says in his masterpiece—

With unperturbed pace . . . majestic instance
it follows on to give shelter to the soul.

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